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YEH YUAN and
CHENG CHUN-LI

Commissioner Lin Tse-hsu

A Film Story

Below we are publishing the story treatment of *Commissioner Lin Tse-hsu*, a historical film widely acclaimed by Chinese audiences in recent years. It tells of the campaign started by Lin Tse-hsu in 1839 to ban opium and the 1840 Opium War between China and Britain which resulted. This first large-scale war between the old China and a powerful Western capitalist country marked the beginning of China's modern history and the anti-imperialist struggles which the Chinese people have carried on incessantly for over a century. The story is based upon historical fact. Lin Tse-hsu, Mu Chang-ngo, Chi Shan, Kuan Tien-pei and Charles Elliot all actually existed.

CHAPTER I

1

The South China Sea.

The boundless ocean stretches to meet the sky. Far out at sea a fleet of three-masted British merchant clippers is approaching.

The huge sails belly out, the British flag flaps in the wind.

On deck are stacked great piles of wooden chests. A British sailor, pipe in mouth, is sitting on one of these piles staring vacantly at the indistinct horizon.

The chests bear the stamp:

UNITED EAST INDIA COMPANY
Company Opium
Net Weight 133 1/3 lbs.

The wet monsoon is blowing, the wind that brings British sailing boats from India. This is the busiest season of the year for English opium-smugglers.

Narration: "About the middle of the eighteenth century, the British imperialists in the West launched economic aggression against China to develop their colonies. They dumped opium in China, injuring millions of Chinese. . . ."

Hundreds of chests of opium are carried aboard the junks of smugglers to be shipped to lonely parts of the coast.

The tide is out. Several junks are stranded on the sand.

Beneath a burning sun, long files of Chinese coolies staggering under heavy loads wade waist-deep through the water towards the shore. They are stripped to the waist, clad in nothing but short pants, and they take great care not to splash the chests of opium.

From the foot of a sheer cliff mounts a narrow path. Chanting "Yo-ho! Heave-ho!" the coolies pant up the shore and strain towards the path. . . .

Narration: ". . . By 1838, in Canton alone, Britain had shipped in more than forty thousand chests of opium, robbing China of more than thirty million taels of silver. China was rapidly nearing bankruptcy. The Chinese people could tolerate this no longer! . . ."

2

Peking, the Meridian Gate — a towering citadel in the shape of a horseshoe, yellow palace walls, bright green glazed tiles, an air of magnificence. . . .

Double ranks of imperial troops in full battle dress, armed with swords and bows and arrows, stand guard every five paces. Like hundreds of stone statues they are drawn up in orderly array from the Gate of Heavenly Peace to the Meridian Gate.

Coolies with chests of opium on their backs can be seen indistinctly (in double print), creeping like spectres towards the Meridian Gate. . . .

This is the hour for the emperor's morning audience. Leopard-tail Guards stand outside Chienching Palace, ten of them holding lances, ten armed with swords.

Before the imperial steps the nine councillors and officials of the six ministries kneel solemnly, awaiting the imperial summons.

Narration: "Among the ruling class of that time there was one group headed by Mu Chang-ngo the chief councillor, who favoured capitulation; and another group headed by Lin Tse-hsu, who was for resistance. A sharp conflict ensued over the prohibition of opium, and at first the Ching emperor, Tao Kuang, favoured the resistance party. . . ."

Chienching Palace. The chief councillor Mu Chang-ngo and four of his assistants prostrate themselves, each in order of rank.

Emperor Tao Kuang, enthroned in state, vents his anger on Mu Chang-ngo. "Hum! Even in the palace men now dare to smoke opium! The eunuchs are smoking it, the princes too. Unparalleled insolence!"

The officials bowing their heads to the ground in fear dare not look up.

The emperor glares angrily at them.

Mu Chang-ngo makes haste to answer meekly, "Yes, Sire. . . . This is outrageous."

After a pause the emperor goes on more gently, "Did I not instruct you to discuss Lin Tse-hsu's proposal for banning opium?"

"Yes, your humble servants have discussed it." Mu Chang-ngo speaks tentatively, watching the emperor's expression. "The six ministries and the Privy Council tend to think the measure proposed too hasty. We beg Your Sagacious Majesty to consider. . . ."

The emperor grows angry. Unrolling Lin Tse-hsu's memorial, he retorts sharply, "Too hasty a measure? Read this. . . ."

The key sentences on the yellow silk have been marked by the emperor's vermilion brush. ". . . If we treat this matter lightly,

another couple of decades will find our empire with no army capable of resisting an enemy and no silver to finance an army. . . ."

Emperor Tao Kuang, reading this, says with passion: "Soldiers incapable of shouldering spears, citizens unable to pay taxes. If such a day comes, how can we preserve our great empire?"

The officials have nothing to say.

"Fools! Idiots!"

The officials prostrate themselves again.

The emperor reflects for a minute, then passes Lin's memorial to Mu Chang-ngo. "Take this and act on it!"

Mu Chang-ngo rises hastily. Bowing, he approaches the throne and respectfully takes the memorial.

The other officials rise too and withdraw in silence.

Outside the palace, an attendant steps out of the corridor and calls towards the imperial steps, "Let Lin Tse-hsu, Governor of Hukuang,* enter the court!"

Another attendant near by takes up the call: "Let Lin Tse-hsu enter the court!"

Lin Tse-hsu mounts the marble steps. He is of medium height, with broad, striking eyebrows. Owing to his pre-occupation at the moment, his eyes, like black pearls, seem preternaturally calm. He is wearing an official robe embroidered with nine five-clawed serpents and an outer jacket with a stork design.** He holds the beads round his neck firmly with his right hand to prevent any noise as he walks.

An attendant raises the padded curtain at the entrance to the court. A ray of sunlight, shining in, emphasizes the gloom within. Lin enters respectfully. The emperor and he are alone in that vast emply hall.

Lin approaches the throne and pays homage. "Your humble servant, Lin Tse-hsu, pays his respects to Your Majesty."

The emperor says slowly and affably, "Lin Tse-hsu, I am appointing you my high commissioner. You will go to Canton and take steps to prohibit the opium trade. . . ."

---

* Hukuang comprised the provinces of Hunan and Hupeh.

** Jacket worn by officials of the first rank.

Lin looks up, clear-eyed, in astonishment.

Tao Kuang, encouragingly: ". . . This matter concerns the security of the whole country. You must handle this important task well."

Lin Tse-hsu hesitates. The next instant, however, he resolutely decides to shoulder this heavy responsibility. "I thank Your Majesty for this appointment!" He prostrates himself. . . .

3

The residence of the chief councillor.

Mu Chang-ngo enters the outer office in a towering rage. Several officials stand up to greet him, but without a glance at them he bears straight on.

His deputy, Chi Shan, comes up to inquire in a low voice, "Well, what does the emperor want?"

Mu pulls Lin's memorial from his sleeve and thrusts it at him. "That's what the emperor wants!"

Chi Shan unrolls the scroll. The other officials crowd round. Chi Shan reads it with mounting fury, then hurries into the inner apartment.

Mu Chang-ngo has removed his robes and is lying as if stunned on the mahogany couch, panting. After hours of kneeling in court, his legs are numb. He rests them on low cushions while a serving boy kneels to pull off his court boots. A group of other boys near by, ready with small spittoons, hot towels, bird-nest soup, hookahs and so forth, come forward in turn.

Chi Shan strides angrily in, flourishing Lin's memorial. "So it seems the emperor has decided to ban opium, eh!"

"Exactly! And there's nothing we can do about it!" Mu Chang-ngo rubs his calves and groans softly as a boy massages his legs.

Like an ant on a hot pan, Chi Shan paces up and down. "With opium banned, the flow of money from Canton will stop. Then we'll have to live on air, I suppose?"

Mu takes the bird-nest soup and reflects for a while. "We'll find some way round this later. To protest just now would be

useless. The emperor has also appointed Lin Tse-hsu as high commissioner."

Chi Shan leaps up as if stung. "What! Lin Tse-hsu as high commissioner? That's too high a promotion for him." He grows more and more indignant. "No, this won't do!" He turns away.

Mu asks hastily, "Where are you going?"

"To tell my old man to speak to the emperor!" He makes off.

Mu halts him. "Come back! Don't you know the emperor's temper yet? . . ."

Chi Shan stops reluctantly to ask sullenly, "Do you mean we should just let this go?"

Mu makes him sit down beside him and says significantly, "This is a tricky business in Canton. I suggest we write to Yu Kun, telling him to take certain steps there."

"Yu Kun?" Chi Shan's eyes light up and he nods, thinking this a good move. He hurries to the desk and picks up a brush, considering how to phrase the letter.

4

The old post-road.

The road winds through mountain ranges. A chestnut horse galloping along it is raising a cloud of dust. The courier, a yellow cloth wrapper containing official documents over his shoulder, keeps whipping his steed on. High mountains loom ahead, but the horse's hooves move as fast as over a plain.

5

The Canton Custom-house.

Night. High under the eaves hang lanterns inscribed "Canton Customs." From the road paved with grey flagstones comes the thunder of hooves as a swift horse gallops to the *yamen* gate. The courier dismounts and rushes inside.

The side door of the hall creaks open and an old servant runs towards the inner apartments with a big envelope. "Hush!" A

concubine slips out to bar the way. She eyes the servant sternly, gesturing towards the room.

Through the curtain of bamboo cut as fine as a cicada's wing, a couch with an ivory opium-set is visible. Yu Kun, Inspector-general of the Canton Customs, is resting with closed eyes on the couch after smoking.

The servant whispers to the concubine, "This is from His Lordship Mu in the capital. It has been sent 600 *li* posthaste."

Yu Kun's eyes, like those of a dead fish, open a crack. He says petulantly, "Let me see it!"

The concubine hastily passes the letter to him and turns up the paraffin lamp which has a white shade. Thinking this a routine matter, Yu Kun starts reading in a cursory fashion; but soon he grows flustered, sits up and raps out an order. "Fetch Wu Shao-jung here at once!"

Behind the bamboo curtain Yu Kun is whispering with the old "hong"* merchant Wu Shao-jung.

Wu looks thoroughly alarmed.

Yu Kun hands him a slip of paper. "Go and see to it now."

Wu Shao-jung nods several times and withdraws in confusion.

Remembering something else, Yu Kun stops him. "Come back!"

Wu turns back, puzzled.

Yu Kun asks, "If the foreigners ask whose idea this is, what will you say?"

"That it's the idea of the inspector-general, of course."

Yu Kun sighs. "Fool! That would spoil everything. My name must not be mentioned. Understand?"

"Ah, yes. I understand." Suddenly enlightened, the merchant turns and hurries out.

6

The English factory.

In the hall small groups of foreign merchants are drinking, gambling, laughing or talking loudly. Wu Shao-jung enters hastily preceded by a servant. The foreigners call out greetings, but Wu

* Merchant in charge of trade with foreigners on behalf of the Ching government.

is in no mood for conversation. With a brief "Good evening!" he follows the servant into the lounge.

The air in the grandiose lounge is thick with cigar smoke. Four or five wealthy foreign merchants are gambling round a table.

Wu Shao-jung bows politely. "Good evening, gentlemen!" He walks over without waiting for an invitation.

The foreigners utter conventional greetings, their eyes on their cards.

Wu Shao-jung sits down beside the big opium trader Lancelot Dent and says quietly, "Mr. Dent, the High Commissioner Lin Tse-hsu will soon be in Canton. Your name is the first on the list of those he means to arrest." He takes a paper from his pocket and spreads it on the table.

The foreign merchants look at the paper with some dismay. "Is this true?"

Dent throws it a glance and says casually, "Don't worry. . . ."

Wu replies uneasily, "I think it would be better for you to go into hiding for a while. . . ."

Dent confidently plays a trump and remarks, "I know what to do."

Wu grows desperate. "Ah, you don't know what a terror this Lin Tse-hsu is. Why, opium addicts in Hukuang tremble at the very sound of his name. I think you'd better go into hiding. We shan't be able to help if there's any trouble."

The servant, knowing Mr. Wu's tastes, brings in coffee.

Dent stops playing to reflect, then asks with a cock-sure smile, "Tell me, isn't this Lin Tse-hsu a Chinese?"

Wu, inhaling the aroma of the coffee, answers in surprise, "Of course he is."

Dent tosses down his stake with a smile. "Well, if he's Chinese he'll be easy to handle. I've yet to meet a Chinese not interested in money. Ha! Ha! . . ."

The other foreign merchants join in the laughter. Wu Shao-jung looks a little embarrassed.

Dent tells his factotum, a clerk in the factory, "George, tell those junks carrying our opium to move immediately out of the harbour to avoid this storm that's blowing up."

George, experienced in Chinese affairs, nods and chuckles. "So another new mandarin is taking up his post!"

General laughter follows.

Not knowing which way to look, Wu Shao-jung shamefacedly takes his leave.

CHAPTER II

1

Canton's Number One Wharf.

Near the bank is moored a row of official vessels flying long pennants and coloured flags. The runners in the prows, drawn up in a V formation, carry on their shoulders red lacquered placards inscribed in gold with such titles as "Governor of Hukuang," "Minister of War."

On the wharf a guard of honour is lined up in four orderly rows. Civil and military officers are standing to attention along the steps.

In the Music Pavilion a band is playing. Spirited tunes of the south are performed on the *sona* to welcome this distinguished newcomer.

Eight bearers carry a sedan-chair draped with green felt from the boat. Stepping carefully over the red carpet spread on the shore, they bear the high commissioner to the Reception Pavilion.

An attendant raises the curtain of the chair, and Lin Tse-hsu bends his head to step out. He is wearing a red-tasselled hat with a bright coral ornament, a yellow jacket lustrous as gold. His brilliant black eyes are gleaming. He is full of energy and holds himself proudly.

Guards below the arch hastily discharge their wooden-handled muskets. As he walks to the Reception Pavilion nine salvoes are fired.

The ceremonial platform is built of marble. Round it stand eighteen guards in ceremonial costume bearing eighteen different kinds of weapon.

On the platform is a square table. On this is a smaller rectangular table, facing south and covered with yellow silk, on which two yellow candles weighing four catties are burning. Before

the table are hassocks of various colours for the officials in order of their rank. First Teng Ting-chen, Governor of Kwangtung and Kwangsi; next Admiral of the Kwangtung Navy, Kuan Tien-pei; then Yu Kun and Commander Han Chao-ching and others. . . .

The officials kneel in respect during the salvoes to welcome the high commissioner.

Lin Tse-hsu mounts the platform and takes his stand solemnly to the left of the sacrificial table. He appears composed and solemn, acting with the dignity befitting an imperial commissioner.

After the officials have prostrated themselves three times and kowtowed nine times, Teng Ting-chen intones, "His Majesty's servant Teng Ting-chen, Governor of Kwangtung and Kwangsi, pays his respects to the emperor." Then the other officials join in, reciting, "We inquire after the health of His Imperial Majesty."

Lin Tse-hsu bows with clasped hands and responds, "His Majesty is enjoying good health!"

As soon as this ceremony of homage is over, Lin Tse-hsu resumes his easy manner. Beaming with pleasure, he hastens to Teng Ting-chen and bows low. "Ting-chen! My respected old friend!"

Smiling all over his face, Teng clasps Lin's hands and shakes them. "So you've come at last! I've been looking forward to this day."

Kuan Tien-pei advances with martial tread to make his bow. "Commissioner!"

Lin politely stops him from bowing. "My dear admiral!" The sight of these two old friends whom he has not met for years moves him to chant two lines of poetry: "After a ten years' absence, the hair on his temples is as white as frost."

Teng retorts, "Are you laughing at me in my old age?"

Lin strokes his long beard. "Not at all. Just look at me!"

The three of them laugh together.

At this moment Yu Kun steps forward to bow and offer his congratulations. "The high commissioner's honourable appointment is indeed a rare mark of His Majesty's gracious favour. Allow me to offer my congratulations."

Lin Tse-hsu hastily protests. "Thank you. His Majesty is too generous, but I am unworthy of this post."

The band plays music to farewell guests. The officials bow and make way. Teng beckons Lin forward. "After you. . . ."

The attendants raise a shout. A long row of official sedan-chairs headed by that with the green felt have been waiting by the steps. Now the bearers raise them and draw back the curtains.

With clasped hands and an apology for taking precedence, Lin Tse-hsu walks down to his chair.

2

The Pearl River — the great artery of southern China and the first port open to foreign trade.

Large junks, their bows painted with huge-eyed monsters, breast the rolling waves and slowly hoist sail as they put out to sea. A host of smaller craft skim like dragon-flies over the water, tacking this way and that.

A gay sampan approaches Shamien. Sturdy Mai Kuan is pulling on two oars at the prow. The boat shoots forward through the foam like an arrow.

In the cabin sit two elderly men dressed like travelling merchants, sipping tea from covered bowls while leaning against the railing to watch the shore.

On the north bank stands a row of newly built Western-style houses, two-storied buildings with pillared facades. In the square in front fly the flags of Britain, the United States, France, Holland and other countries. Some merchants and sailors have set up stalls to sell linen, broadcloth, clocks, air-guns, kaleidoscopes and other new-fangled foreign goods.

One of the passengers turns his head to ask: "Isn't that the place where the foreign merchants live?"

The other nods significantly. These two men are Lin Tse-hsu and Teng Ting-chen.

"Here!" calls Lin, wanting a better look. "Take the boat closer in!"

The woman holding the rudder is Mai Kuan's wife. Having grown up by the stormy sea she is strong and active. She has fastened her year-old baby to her back to leave her hands free for the tasks which she never seems to finish. She looks at the

passenger who has spoken and smiles. "Is this your first visit to Canton, sir?"

Lin answers vaguely, "Eh? Oh, yes."

"Come to buy goods?" she hazards.

Lin smiles. "Ah, yes."

In the Shamien square, Dent is walking through the crowd with a middle-aged foreigner, a man of some importance obviously judging by the way the others bow to him.

Recognizing this man, Mai Kuan's wife looks grim. She calls towards the prow, "Kuan, that foreign devil* is here again!"

Lin asks with surprise, "Which foreign devil do you mean?"

She points to the other side of the square. "Look! He's British consul or something. His name is Elliot."

Dent conducts Elliot to the balcony of the factory, where they have a lively conversation. Charles Elliot, like many other ambitious naval officers from aristocratic English families at that time, has aspired since his youth to conquer more colonies for his sovereign, thereby winning promotion and a fortune for himself. He has been a slave-driver in Guiana. Now, within three years of coming to China, he has risen to the post of superintendent of trade and plenipotentiary representative of the British government.

Mai Kuan turns and catches sight of Elliot. "Swine!" he swears.

Lin asks curiously, "Why? What has he got against him?"

The wife answers indignantly, "His father was killed by those foreign devils."

"Ah!" Lin's gleaming eyes widen.

"Those devils took our boat by force to help unload their opium. When his father resisted, they shot him."

"When was this?" Lin inquires with concern.

"Last year. . . ."

Before she can say more, Mai Kuan cuts in angrily, "Don't talk about it!" Any mention of this tragedy enrages him.

His wife swallows back the words.

Lin looks at Mai Kuan with silent sympathy for a while. Then he asks Teng softly: "Doesn't this Elliot live in Macao?"

* By "foreign devil" the people meant those who came to plunder wealth and infringe the territorial rights of China.

"He travels back and forth."

Mai Kuan's wife puts in quickly, "Humph! He always brings trouble with him." She lowers her voice to a confidential whisper. "But we hear the emperor's sent a high commissioner to deal with him!"

Lin makes an inaudible answer.

Mai Kuan thinks, "All crows everywhere are equally black. There can't be such a thing as a good official." He mutters, "High commissioner? Pah!"

Lin steals a glance at Teng Ting-chen and flushes.

A dingy, narrow street by the Pearl River leads to a little wharf where small boats and fishing vessels are moored. There Lin and Teng go ashore.

Although this is a small street, it has all the usual features of fishing villages in Kwangtung: stalls selling herbal tea and wooden slippers, tea-house, smithies, ship-chandlers, shops selling candles, incense, paper money and figures for funerals. The smartest place is an opium den called "The Hermitage."

The evening customers have just started flocking to the tea-house. Coolies, boatmen and fisherfolk sit round the tables or squat on bamboo benches sipping dark red tea. They chat and laugh to forget the day's fatigue.

In the door of the tea-house a blind singsong girl, pale as wax, is singing, accompanied by a fiddler like a wizened monkey. The plaintive Cantonese tune, her listless voice and the screeching of the old fiddle cast a gloom over the evening.

Teng Ting-chen leads Lin Tse-hsu to the opium den. All is dark within and the gate is sealed by wooden planks. A notice is affixed: "By Order of the Governor of Kwangtung and Kwangsi."

Teng comments softly, "We sealed up this den some time ago."

Lin nods. They stroll on, their attention caught by the song and the pallor of the blind singer. Lin fumbles for some loose silver and tosses it into the cracked tray in her hand.

At once the fiddling stops. Scrawny fingers reach out to grab the silver.

Lin is shocked and promptly seizes the lean man's wrist. "Here! Who are you? . . ."

The fellow gives an embarrassed, conciliatory laugh.

The blind singer intercedes for him, explaining, "He's my husband."

As Lin hesitates, the wizened fiddler whips back his hand and races off.

The blind girl starts to cry, her face to the wall.

Sensing a mystery, Lin runs after the fiddler who disappears round a corner.

Lin and Teng follow him down the alley. Light is gleaming through a crack in a dilapidated shutter, and they go close to peer in.

Inside is a dark, dank hovel. Two rows of mats are spread on the earth floor, some opium lamps are flickering like will-o'-the-wisps. Seven or eight opium addicts are lying there smoking.

The wizened fiddler rushes down the steps, tosses his silver to the manager, hastily seizes an opium-set and finds himself a place on the ground.

Lin is shocked, the next moment angry. He glances at Teng. The governor who had no idea that such abuses still persisted under his jurisdiction, bows his head in shame.

It is late at night. Moonlight is shining on the river. The two men, deep in thought, pace along the deserted streets.

A girl on the river is singing of the wretched life of the boat-dwellers.

Eventually Lin breaks a long silence to say, "Ting-chen, that poison has a deep hold on people. I fear only strong measures will suffice."

Teng sighs. "Ah, I'm to blame for being too easy-going at the start and allowing the poison to spread."

Lin looks at him. "Why was that?"

Teng speaks with bitterness. "Here in Canton we're up against foreigners as well as the nobles. I was afraid to break the vessel when trying to kill the rat."

Lin senses that he has someone specific in mind. "You mean people like Yu Kun?"

Teng nods emphatically. "Yes. You'll understand after you meet them tomorrow."

Unwittingly they have reached the wharf. The moon is bright over the Pearl River. Several boats are hoisting sail to put out to sea with the night tide.

Conscious that great difficulties lie ahead, Lin looks thoughtfully at Teng. "Ting-chen, I'm new here, so I'll need your help!"

Teng remembers a letter he wrote not long ago to Lin, pledging his whole-hearted support and calling on the sea as witness. He says, "Tse-hsu, I swear to do all in my power to help you rid China of this filthy opium."

In gratitude Lin clasps Teng's hands.

3

Teng Ting-chen gives a feast to welcome Lin Tse-hsu, inviting Kuan Tien-pei, Yu Kun, Han Chao-ching and Wu Shao-jung. After the host has offered the last toast, he asks his guests to adjourn to the sitting-room.

Since Lin wants to sound Yu Kun out, he enters into conversation with him. As soon as guests and host have taken their seats again, servants bring in tea and hookahs.

Lin starts the conversation. "Inspector-general, there has been a strict ban on opium in Canton in the last few months. But why is it the results haven't been too satisfactory?"

Yu Kun smiles faintly. "It seems to me that the cause lies not in Canton but on the high seas."

Lin thinks there is something in this and turns to ask Admiral Kuan, "Admiral, how many opium clippers do the foreigners have at sea?"

Clasping his hands respectfully, Kuan answers, "They have twenty-two here now, Commissioner."

Lin says firmly, "Then we'll confiscate all the opium on those boats. If we don't go to the root of the matter, the problem will never be solved." This is obviously aimed at Yu Kun.

Kuan Tien-pei, inwardly applauding the high commissioner's courage, assents readily.

Han Chao-ching and Wu Shao-jung exchange uneasy glances.

With another languid smile, as if offering a well-meant reminder, Yu Kun says, "High Commissioner, I'm afraid dealing with those foreigners won't be so easy."

"Indeed?" Lin looks rather astonished. "May I ask why?"

Yu Kun smiles. "Their ships are on the high seas, not in our harbour."

Lin senses sarcasm but says unequivocally, "No matter. If the foreigners themselves are in Canton, they can be dealt with." He turns abruptly to Wu Shao-jung. "That man Dent hasn't run away, has he, Inspector Wu?"

Wu hesitates for a moment before answering, "No."

"Have him arrested," Lin orders. "Then he'll hardly refuse to hand over the opium."

Wu dares not protest but steals a frantic look at Yu Kun.

Yu Kun will not meet his eyes. When Lin addresses Han Chao-ching, however, he is secretly startled again.

Han Chao-ching is an officer of the naval patrol responsible for checking opium-smuggling. Since he gives part of the bribes he receives from the foreigners to the Customs, saying this is silver confiscated from the smugglers, he is well regarded by the government. Not long before this he was promoted to the rank of a commander and rewarded with a feather in his official cap. He has always worked hand in glove with Yu Kun.

Lin orders him, "Commander Han, go and keep a close watch on the foreigners' factories. Not a single foreigner is to be allowed to leave."

Han assents with an uneasy glance at Yu Kun.

Since Wu and Han are hesitating, Lin stands up and prompts them, "Will you two gentlemen go now and see to this?"

Wu and Han have to bow and take their leave. Lin takes a few steps forward to see them off.

Yu Kun is worried, not having expected to be defeated in the first encounter. He says significantly, "Canton is not like the cities in the interior, Commissioner. One must not be too hasty in dealing with foreigners, but should be careful to avoid trouble."

Kuan Tien-pei is outraged by this servile attitude. "You think they might dare to resort to war?" he asks.

Instead of backing down, Yu Kun says coldly, "Humph. . . . It's best to be prepared for all eventualities."

Lin is somewhat astonished. "But we have our guns too."

"Aha, Commissioner! Those guns of ours. . . ." Yu Kun eyes Kuan Tien-pei sarcastically. "The admiral can tell you all about them."

Kuan flushes and he nearly flares up. Only Teng's quiet pressure on his hand makes him swallow his anger.

Lin notices all this without appearing to do so. He says slowly, "The inspector-general was right to remind me. When men fail to look far ahead they may run into trouble close at hand. Without adequate coastal defences, we cannot carry out an effective ban."

Yu Kun uneasily senses something behind this.

Lin comes swiftly and resolutely to the point. "Admiral Kuan, you will instruct our naval forces to set sail immediately and see that not one foreign ship escapes. Tomorrow we will go to Humen* to inspect the gun emplacements."

Kuan Tien-pei has long been hoping to see this day. He answers eagerly, "Very good, Commissioner!"

Lin Tse-hsu's drastic methods take Yu Kun aback.

4

Humen, sentinel of the Pearl River. Below it the river fans out so suddenly that its banks are lost to sight.

Great Tiger Hill rises from the river like a great crouching tiger, ready to leap up with bared fangs to guard the way.

Near Shakok, a precipice plunges into the sea. Lin Tse-hsu, Kuan Tien-pei and Teng Ting-chen are looking out from the top of this sheer cliff. Behind them are attendants holding dark silk umbrellas and long fans. In this superb scenery, human beings appear small and insignificant.

Islands, reefs and sandbanks dot the sea far and near, making it seem like a chess-board with strong defences marshalled by a skilful player.

Lin looks through his telescope and cannot help nodding approvingly. "There's an old saying that the Yangtse is a natural barrier, but I think Humen has equal strategic value."

* Meaning literally "tiger's gate."

"True!" Kuan sighs. "Please inspect our gun emplacements, Commissioner."

They make their way to the gun emplacements.

Weiyuan Fort.

Looking down from the top of the hill towards the ocean, seven or eight terraces can be seen at different levels on the cliff. In the middle of each is a round emplacement fifty feet across and five feet below the ground, containing an obsolete type of gun weighing from one thousand to five thousand catties. Seven or eight of these emplacements form one unit, guarding the river mouth.

Flags flutter, drums and trumpets sound from the cliff as the gunners and soldiers kneel at their posts waiting to be inspected by the high commissioner.

Lin and the others walk to one emplacement where the gunners have the rod heated in readiness for the order to fire.

Lin examines some of the smaller guns which strike him as thoroughly antiquated. He taps the barrel of one and asks Kuan, "When was this made?"

Kuan tugs at his grizzled beard with a bitter smile. "In the forty-second year of Emperor Chien Lung. It's three years older than I am."

After a short silence, Lin asks, "Can we try it?"

"Yes." Kuan gives the order, "Fire!"

The gunner lights the fuse and a shell is fired.

Lin and Teng look far out to sea.

But making only a small splash in the water, the shell drops like a meteoric stone in the bay not far off. Kuan cries wrathfully, "You see the sort of guns we have, Commissioner!" He hurries to the edge of the cliff to stare indignantly at the boundless ocean.

Lin gazes after him sadly in silence. Presently he takes a roll of paper from an attendant and walks slowly over to Kuan. He tells him encouragingly, "Admiral, you can start work at once making new guns." He solemnly hands the roll of paper to Kuan Tien-pei, who unrolls it and sees it is the blue-print of a new type of Portuguese gun.

The old admiral's beard quivers with emotion. He cries, "When we've rebuilt this fort, Commissioner, if those foreign devils dare invade our celestial empire, I can promise to smash them to pieces!"

Teng looks a little dubious. "But . . . will the court allocate the necessary funds?"

"Don't worry." Lin speaks with confidence. "I thought about that. I intend to ask Yu Kun to help. . . ."

Teng shows scepticism. "It's hard to get so much as a hair out of him."

At this moment Kuan's lieutenant Sun Chang-ching runs up from the foot of the cliff and reports elatedly, "Commissioner! We've intercepted all the British opium clippers!"

"Good!" Lin is very pleased. "Now the gateway is blocked, Governor. The turtle is in the pot!"

Confident laughter echoes through the hills.

CHAPTER III

1

The square outside the factories is deserted. A company of the Green Battalion* marches past with a flag showing that it is on sentry duty.

Han Chao-ching rides up and down on a charger, inspecting.

A hall in the merchants' quarters. A large punkah hung from the ceiling helps to dispel the sultry early summer heat. Wu Shao-jung is sitting cross-legged on a high-backed plush chair in the middle of the hall. Behind him stand four runners, two on each side. On his left the interpreter he has brought is reading out the high commissioner's order.

* i.e. the Green Banner troops. In the Ching dynasty, apart from troops of Manchu nationality divided into eight banners with different colours: yellow, white, red, blue, etc., soldiers of Han nationality were all under the green banner, hence the name.

The British merchants, assembled at the other end of the hall, listen respectfully.

The interpreter reads loudly and formally, ". . . By order of the high commissioner, all foreign merchants must hand over every particle of opium in their possession. At the same time they must enter into a bond agreeing never hereafter to bring opium in their ships. Anyone doing so will have his opium confiscated and will suffer the extreme penalty of the law. . . ."

A foreigner, bewildered by this legal language, asks loudly, "What's meant by the 'extreme penalty'?"

"He will be beheaded," the interpreter explains.

At once a tension creeps into the air. The merchants start whispering or exchanging noisy comments.

At this moment George, the factotum, comes calmly downstairs with a silver platter which he presents with a bow to Wu Shao-jung.

On the platter is a slip of paper. Wu picks it up and reads:

"H. M. Consul, Mr. Elliot, asks Mr. Wu to come for a talk."

In the office upstairs.

Elliot is in a bad temper.

Head down, chin cupped in his hand, Dent is listening restively to Elliot, who says vehemently, "A blunder! You made a bad blunder! You should have taken Wu Shao-jung's advice and left Canton. . . ."

Elliot is on good terms with Dent, but as a "diplomat" from an aristocratic family he despises merchants who understand nothing but trade.

Dent has his own ideas; he retorts, "But our ships are at sea already. So the necessity doesn't arise."

"Dreaming again!" Elliot cuts him short speaking with severity. "Let me tell you some good news, my friend. All our ships have been detained by Lin Tse-hsu."

Dent leaps to his feet in dismay. "What!"

Elliot laughs scornfully at his alarm and orders him. "Since it's come to this, you must leave for Macao at once."

At a loss, Dent mutters, "But. . . ."

Elliot says decisively, "There's no but about it."

Dent demurs, "I'm afraid we've left it too late." He runs to the window overlooking the river and lifts the bamboo curtain. Pointing to the close formation of guards on the bank, he says, "See there. . . ."

Elliot follows him and looks down.

Small groups of local people are holding lively discussions on the wharf.

A squad of sentries files past.

Mai Kuan and his wife are among the crowd watching the activities in the factories.

Elliot turns to say casually, "Never mind. Wu Shao-jung will help you out."

Dent is worried. "You think he still will now?"

Elliot has complete confidence. "Of course he will." He walks off light-heartedly.

Fuming with anger, Dent lets go of the curtain which drops suddenly casting dark shadows over him, making his face appear more sombre than ever. He says angrily, "Charles, I really can't understand why our government doesn't take action to protect British merchants."

Elliot replies guardedly, "The time isn't ripe for that yet. Understand?"

Before Dent can press the matter, there comes knocking on the door and Elliot signs to him to keep quiet. In civil tones, Elliot calls out, "Come in!"

The door opens to admit George leading Wu Shao-jung. Elliot goes forward politely to take Wu's hand and greet him like an intimate friend. With easy charm and informality he half drags Wu to his seat. "Forgive me for troubling you, Mr. Wu!" He smiles. "But I wanted to ask a small favour of you."

Wu realizes there must be some reason for this unusual politeness. He says with some confusion, "Certainly. I'll do anything possible."

The servant comes as usual to ask, "Coffee, Mr. Wu?"

As if this were a routine request, Elliot says, "I hope you'll help Mr. Dent to get to Macao."

Wu is startled. "Ah . . . it would be too dangerous."

Elliot warns him, "But his failure to leave could have even more dangerous consequences for you."

This strikes home. Wu's face falls and he says imploringly, "The way things are now, Mr. Elliot, I don't see how it could be done. . . ."

Seeing he has capitulated, Elliot reassures him, "I have a way." He leads Wu to the window at the back and points down.

In the back wall of the house there is a small gate giving on to a quiet alley.

Elliot whispers to Wu, "At twelve tonight, here. . . ." The rest is inaudible.

2

Night. The big clock of the factory chimes twelve.

Two fast sedan-chairs speed into the alley. Lanterns with the words "Canton Customs" are carried swiftly before the chairs towards the small gate in the wall.

A runner hurries to the gate and knocks softly several times.

Wu Shao-jung, hiding in one chair, dare not show himself but urges them to make haste.

Dent pops his head out from the gate. He is dressed like a Chinese official in a red-tasselled mandarin cap, long gown and short jacket. He bolts into the empty chair.

The two chairs are carried swiftly away.

Shamien is surrounded by water, but two stone bridges lead to Hsiti and Shihpafu. Troops of the Green Battalion are guarding the bridge heads, permitting no one to pass.

As the two chairs approach rapidly, the officer in charge shouts from the bridge, "Halt! Who goes there?"

The runners raise high the lanterns with the red characters "Canton Customs" and prepare to move on, answering boldly, "We are on official business."

The sentries cross their lances to bar the way.

The officer calls out, "By order of High Commissioner Lin, all officials, civil or military, must dismount to be searched."

The silence at night makes this call carry further than usual, arousing the boatmen who have moored near by. Mai Kuan comes out from his cabin to watch the shore.

Wu Shao-jung has to summon up courage to emerge. Pointing to the chair behind, he says, "My friend is ill and will have to be excused."

"No. Our orders are to search." The officer approaches the other chair. Wu hastily intercepts him.

Dent, hearing the argument, is afraid the game is up.

Suddenly an officer strides quickly over and calls sternly to the sentries, "What's going on here?" The men are awed into silence.

The new arrival is Han Chao-ching. Wu hails him as a saviour. Hastily bowing with clasped hands, he cries, "Commander Han!"

Han Chao-ching pretends that this meeting is fortuitous. "Oh, it's you, Inspector. Where are you off to so late?"

Wu eyes him significantly. "I am on urgent business."

Han, understanding, casually waves his hand. "Please go ahead!"

The sentries make way, trailing their lances behind them.

With profuse thanks, Wu mounts his chair again.

The two chairs are carried safely over the bridge.

Mai Kuan has seen this clearly from his boat and is suspicious. He puts on his clothes and goes ashore. His wife, aroused by the noise, emerges from the cabin too.

The two chairs are carried to a deserted jetty. There is a fishing village near by, whose boat-dwellers have erected poles in the mud washed down by the river and built huts roofed with the bark of trees. This conglomeration of huts forms a sort of village.

The jetty is thickly shaded by a large banyan tree. By the stone steps is moored a skiff with the lantern of the "Canton Customs" hanging from its prow.

Wu Shao-jung dismounts hastily to look around. Seeing nobody about, he calls to Dent, "Mr. Dent, quickly! Get on the boat."

Dent answers, "Right."

Wu bows with clasped hands. "Good sailing!"

Thanking him hastily, Dent starts down the steps. He bumps into the low branches of the banyan tree and his mandarin cap is knocked off. It rolls down the steps into the river, to be caught by the current.

Dent shouts, "My cap! Get it! Quick!"

The runners try to retrieve it with their poles, but the cap floats further off.

Mai Kuan has slipped silently behind the banyan to watch.

Dent jumps up and down, covering his head with his hands.

Mai Kuan sees the foreigner's short yellow hair, and gives a cry.

Wu Shao-jung stamps frantically. "Ah, let it go! Here, take mine!" He takes off his own mandarin cap for Dent, who rushes eagerly up the steps to get it.

Mai Kuan darts out from behind the tree. With one leap he tackles Dent and fells him to the ground. The two of them struggle.

Wu orders his runners, "Get that man!"

Chair-bearers and runners rush over to join in the fight, Mai Kuan tries to call for help, but a brawny hand stops his mouth.

Wu Shao-jung orders the bearers to get a pole from a chair and deals a whacking blow at Mai Kuan's head. With a cry, the boatman falls unconscious, blood streaming from his face.

Dent struggles up from the ground. Wu asks, "Mr. Dent, you aren't hurt?" The Englishman shakes his head.

They disperse. Wu hastily mounts his chair to get away. Dent runs to the boat, which casts off. . . .

Mai Kuan comes to and tries to get to his feet, but the effort makes him lose consciousness again.

A voice in the distance calls, "Kuan!" A shadowy form darts towards him – it is his wife. Finding the place deserted, she runs to the jetty and discovers him lying in a pool of blood. With a cry of alarm she stoops down to raise his head. Swiftly she tears a strip from her jacket and binds up his wound, calling again and again, "Kuan, Kuan! What happened?"

Mai Kuan answers hoarsely, "Catch the foreigner."

His wife shakes him. "What foreigner? Where?"

He points to the river. "He got away in the boat. . . ." He faints away again. His wife scans the darkling river.

A skiff is fast disappearing into the night.

Mai Kuan's wife helps him up, shouting towards the village, "Catch the foreigner! Catch the foreigner!"

Fisherfolk, awakened from their sleep, run out from their huts and call loudly,

"What happened?"

"What foreigner?"

Liang San seeing Mai Kuan's wound asks in alarm, "What's wrong with Brother Mai Kuan?"

His wife answers, "He was beaten up by a foreigner." Since Mai Kuan is too weak to walk, she turns nimbly round and lifts him on to her back, then starts quickly off.

The boatmen crowd around. Liang San asks, "Where are you going?"

Without turning her head she says, "I'm going after him."

Liang San overtakes her and urges her, "Go home to take care of Brother Mai Kuan. We'll get the foreigner."

But she refuses emphatically. "No!" She walks on with her husband on her back.

The villagers are shouting, pleading with her. All is confusion, no one has a plan of action.

Suddenly a voice thunders out drowning the hubbub. "Don't be in such a hurry! Keep calm!" Strangely enough, the clamouring villagers immediately turn silent.

"Daughter, you come back too."

Mai Kuan's wife, who had seemed nearly out of her mind, stops obediently and slowly retraces her steps.

Kuang Tung-shan, a vigorous fisherman of over fifty, is standing on the bridge outside the village. He is Mai Kuan's father-in-law. His bronzed, weathered face, quick, steady eyes, the strong lines of his mouth and his resolute bearing proclaim him someone out of the common run. The others make way for him. Kuang Tung-shan goes to his daughter's side and examines Mai Kuan's wound.

She says urgently, "If we don't start soon, father, the foreigner will get away."

Kuang replies calmly, "With our men all over the waterways, where can he escape to?"

Understanding her father, she knows better than to argue. Seeing her hesitation, he says, "Give Mai Kuan to me." Some of the other fishermen promptly pick up Mai Kuan to carry him back to the village. His wife follows them.

Kuang orders a sturdy fisherman near him, "Get over to Lotus Hill as fast as you can and tell them from me to search all outgoing boats."

"Right." The man hurries off.

Kuang takes a torch from another of the men behind him. Raising it high, he asks the crowd, "Who will head the first pursuit party?"

At this, Mai Kuan's wife, who had been accompanying her husband, turns back and cries quickly, "I will!" She seizes the torch.

Kuang holds up another torch and asks, "Who will head the second party?"

Liang San answers, "I will!" He takes the torch.

Kuang orders them solemnly, "Get started then."

Two groups of men, holding torches high, fall in swiftly behind these two leaders.

The leaping flames and dark smoke of the torches cast flickering shadows on the old hero's face.

3

On the pitch-dark river, torches gleam in the distance and draw nearer, their flames reflected in the waves. Mai Kuan's wife, fishing trident in her hand, is standing at the prow of a sampan coming up from the right side.

Liang San and his men are searching the left side.

Oars cleave the water, swifter and surer than the fins of fish.

The runners on the government boat wake up to the fact that the sampans are trailing them. They call out empty threats: "Get out of the way! Make way! This is a government boat."

The sampans catch up with the boat, intercepting it. Mai Kuan's wife leaps over before they are alongside. She is followed by Liang San and other fishermen.

The unarmed runners huddle together and cringe, not daring to interfere.

Mai Kuan's wife with her trident and Liang San with his torch plunge into the cabin.

The cabin has no exit. Dent is trapped as if in a cage with no way out. He shrinks into one corner, his face twitching with fear.

Mai Kuan's wife catches hold of him and throws him out on to the deck.

Dent in desperation tries using the threat so effective with Ching government officials. He protests indignantly, "I . . . I'm a foreigner."

But the common people are not impressed by this. Mai Kuan's wife deals him a resounding slap on the face. "We know you're a foreigner."

Dent shamelessly changes his tune. "No . . . I'm Chinese."

Mai Kuan's wife hits him again. He claps a hand to his cheek and says no more. Mai Kuan's wife signals to the rest. Liang San and others tie Dent up.

CHAPTER IV

1

The High Commissioner's Headquarters.

Daybreak. Morning sunlight shines on the placard "Office of the High Commissioner." The shadows of night still linger in the corners of the venerable building.

Two rows of guards stand at the gate all through the night.

Intermittent groans break the silence. The guards prick up their ears and start looking round. By a corner of the wall they discover a large sack from which the groans are issuing. Two of them open it carefully. Inside Dent is trussed up, half conscious, groaning feebly. Beside him is a slip of coarse paper. The guards pick it up.

On the paper is written:

> This is the foreigner Dent
> Who has committed heinous crimes;
> The Customs sent a boat for Dent,
> Commander Han saw he got through;
> We've caught the wretch and brought him back.
> If the officials dare to do this again,
> We'll kill those traitors too.
>
> Kuang Tung-shan

Early in the morning Admiral Kuan receives a report from the officer on duty and loses no time in taking this slip of paper to Lin Tse-hsu. The high commissioner has just got up. His gown thrown over his shoulders, he reads the message and asks with a frown, "Who is this Kuang Tung-shan?"

Kuan has already made inquiries and answers, "He's a fisherman who's made quite a name for himself on the Pearl River."

"I'd like to see him."

"These fishermen aren't easy to find. They're so often out at sea."

Lin looks thoughtfully at the paper, then calls out, "Here!"

An attendant hurries in. "Yes, Your Excellency!"

"Order all officials of provincial and prefectural rank to come here at once for a conference."

"Yes, Your Excellency!" The attendant starts out quickly.

On second thoughts, Lin adds, "Ask Inspector-general Yu to come too."

"Yes, Your Excellency!" The attendant hurries off.

2

The hall of the commissioner's office.

In his official robes and jacket, Lin comes in carrying the high commissioner's seal. With dignity he seats himself behind the table in the middle. The two rows of officials of provincial and prefectural rank lined up solemnly before him hold their breath and stand with their hands at their sides, their eyes on the ground.

Though the spacious hall is packed, not a sound can be heard apart from the commissioner's resonant voice.

". . . The suppression of the opium traffic is a life and death matter for hundreds of millions in our great empire. Yet for decades this poison has been spreading throughout the interior, and has never been wiped out despite repeated bans. Why?"

Lin runs penetrating eyes over the officials. His sharp question makes the men on both sides bow low, cringing all at once.

He continues solemnly, "All of us receive great kindness from the court and live on salaries granted by His Majesty. Yet some of us are abetting this opium traffic, accepting bribes from the foreigners and letting them off. Can such people be regarded as men?" As his anger bursts out he bangs the table.

The officials bow in panic and reply together, "Who would dare do such a thing?"

Lin's glaring eyes come to rest on Han Chao-ching. He calls, "Han Chao-ching!"

Trembling from head to foot, Han rejoins, "Yes, Your Excellency!"

Lin fixes him with his gaze. "How did that foreigner Dent manage to escape, eh?"

Finding it useless to prevaricate, Han falters, "It was . . . it was owing to my negligence. . . ."

Lin laughs derisively. Slowly and clearly he demands, "Do you realize the enormity of your crime?"

Han is paralysed with fear. He falls to his knees.

Lin throws the documents on the table to the ground. "There is Dent's confession. Read it!"

Han crawls forward to pick up the file.

Lin looks round the hall, then turns to the right. "Wu Shao-jung!"

Turning pale, Wu answers, "Yes, Your Excellency!"

Lin demands severely, "Why isn't Inspector-general Yu here?"

Panic-stricken and desperate, Wu answers, "I don't know, Your Excellency."

Enraged by Yu Kun's insubordination, Lin rises abruptly and leaves through the Unicorn Gate, going back to the apartment in the rear.

Runners shout, "Dismiss!"

The officials bow with clasped hands and retire. Fearing to be involved, they scatter in confusion. The hall is suddenly empty except for Han Chao-ching kneeling on the brick-paved ground.

An attendant runs out from the back to pass on an order. "The high commissioner orders Han Chao-ching to be taken to the provincial judge for further questioning."

"Yes, Your Excellency!" Two guards come forward and march Han out of the hall.

Like a fish escaping from a net, Wu Shao-jung is slipping away through the crowd when another attendant runs out from the side to bar his way. "One moment, Inspector Wu! The high commissioner wants you to remain."

Wu, unable to escape, is petrified with terror. The attendant signs to him, "This way, please!" Dejectedly, Wu follows him.

The inner hall. Outside is a courtyard with flowers and trees. Through the latticed door a quiet study can be seen. Lin is striding up and down the room in a seething rage.

The attendant hurries in to announce, "Inspector Wu is awaiting Your Excellency's pleasure."

Wu slips in, trembling, to fall on one knee. "Your Excellency!"

Lin does not even look at him but waves him away. "Wait outside!" He goes on pacing the room.

Wu assents and withdraws so hastily that he trips over the threshold and nearly falls. This jolt arouses him. He staggers to the corridor and sinks despairingly on to a round stone stool.

Lin goes to his desk and takes up the slip of paper. His eyes fall again on the words:

> The Customs sent a boat for Dent,
> Commander Han saw he got through;

This adds fuel to the fire. He mutters, "So you won't come when asked. . . ." He turns to the hall and shouts, "Here!"

An attendant appears at the study door. "Your Excellency!"

In a towering rage, Lin orders, "Take my card and go again to invite Inspector-general Yu to come here."

The attendant hurries out.

Lin's heart is burning within him. He takes up a bowl of tea, flicks off the tea leaves and drinks a mouthful. Thinking of Yu

Kun's obstructive tactics and pull, he mutters, "These obstructions must be swept aside." He bangs the bowl down so hard that it breaks. Tea is spilt all over the table. . . .

Perched on a stool in the corridor, Wu starts up at the sound. This sign of the commissioner's anger drains all the colour from his face.

Lin's old servant, Lin Sheng, runs apprehensively in.

Lin sobers up after his outburst. He looks shamefacedly from the servant to the broken bowl and spilt tea. With a sigh he turns involuntarily to a motto hanging on the wall.

CONTROL THE TEMPER!

A reminder from Lin Tse-hsu to himself
The third month of the year *Jen-hsu*

Regretting this lapse, Lin hangs his head and slowly sits down. Without a word Lin Sheng fetches a duster to mop up the tea

and clear away the debris. Lin reflects and controls himself. He reaches out for the duster, saying, "Let me."

"You'd better rest, sir. . . ." The servant knows how hard his master works.

Ignoring this protest, Lin takes the duster and starts clearing up. The servant has to stand and watch as the commissioner, swallowing his anger, carefully clears up.

Night.

With great difficulty the attendant prevails upon Yu Kun to come.

When he passes through the courtyard to the inner hall, Wu Shao-jung rushes out from the corridor where he has been detained as if his saviour had appeared. He bends one knee and implores Yu's help. "Inspector-general!"

Yu is startled by Wu's presence here. "Oh! You?"

"I. . . ." Wu is ready to pour out his complaints.

"Not now!" Yu hastily stops him.

The attendant announces from the hall, "Inspector-general Yu!" Yu Kun seizes this chance to avoid Wu as if the latter were unclean.

Lin is now calm and composed. He hurries cordially to the door to welcome Yu Kun. "Forgive me for not meeting you at the gate."

Yu has worked out his strategy. He starts casually, "I've been so busy selecting tribute for His Majesty these last few days that I failed to attend the meeting. Pray excuse me."

Lin smiles significantly. "I didn't want to disturb you, but the matter is urgent."

After host and guest have taken their seats, Yu Kun takes the offensive, asking with a smile, "Is it true, as I heard, that Dent managed to get away?"

Conscious of a barb in these words, Lin strikes back firmly. "He has been brought back again."

With a secret start, Yu wonders whether this is true.

Lin adroitly changes the subject. "I wanted to enlist your most valuable assistance in the matter of the foreign merchants."

Yu Kun, uncertain of his ground, is slightly flustered. "Certainly, if there is anything I can do. . . ."

Lin speaks gravely. "The reason for the arrogance of the foreigners is the fact that they have powerful ships, big guns and well-armed forces. The state of our own defences you well know. . . ."

Yu Kun smiles sarcastically. "Didn't the admiral say he was quite confident?"

Lin sighs lightly. "Even the best of cooks is helpless without rice. Without funds, he can do nothing. So after giving a great deal of thought to the matter, I would like to borrow three hundred thousand taels of silver from the Customs to rebuild the fortress." He casts a speculative glance at the other.

Yu Kun is taken completely by surprise. He says after a moment's silence, "Ah . . . all the proceeds from the Canton Customs have to be forwarded regularly to Peking. I haven't a single cent left in my coffers."

Lin smiles at this transparent hedging. "Surely it can't be as bad as all that? . . ."

Yu Kun's answer is polite but firm. "This is a system laid down by the court. I dare not tamper with it."

"Let's not discuss it then," acquiesces Lin tactfully. Since negotiations have failed, he changes his tactics. He slowly takes the slip of coarse paper from his sleeve. "Recently there have been rumours outside. I expect you've heard them too, Inspector-general?" He passes over the paper.

Yu Kun reads the verse with inward trepidation, but puts a bold face on the matter. "It's an obvious fabrication." He returns the slip to Lin as if it were beneath his notice.

In face of his opponent's stubborn resistance, Lin decides to play his trump card. "Oh, but there is that confession written by Dent. . . ." He signs to Yu to wait, and turns to enter the study.

As Lin turns away, Yu Kun's defences begin to crumble.

Wu Shao-jung has been waiting for this opportunity. He peers round the door, anxious for help. Yu Kun, finding an outlet for his pent-up anger, glares furiously at Wu, holding him responsible for all this trouble.

Yu Kun goes into the study too.

Lin draws Dent's confession from the files and hands it to him.

After reading it, Yu Kun parries, "This foreigner is trying to clear himself by shifting the blame."

Lin gives him a look and takes back the confession with a cold laugh.

Driven to the wall, Yu Kun decides to back down and change the subject. "Foreigners are all very crafty. We must be constantly on our guard." He assumes a righteous air and says decidedly, as if having reconsidered Lin's proposal, "Oh, about the question of repairing the fortress. It does seem an excellent idea. If the court has no funds, I shall be willing to find ways and means."

Lin smiles knowingly. "Splendid. Then we'll trouble you to help us."

"Not at all, not at all. . . ." He is anxious to get away. "I shall go and attend to it immediately." He takes his leave.

Lin sees him out. Yu Kun laughs heartily and bids him a cordial farewell.

The moment Lin has turned back, Wu Shao-jung hurries up to Yu Kun. "Inspector-general!"

Yu Kun glares at him, shakes his sleeves in disgust and stalks off.

Wu resolves to run after him.

From the inner hall comes Lin's resonant voice. "Take Wu Shao-jung to the main prefecture and have him detained there."

Wu collapses limply. Two guards come forward and seize his arms to drag him down the steps.

Lin has been busy since morning. Now that everything is working out, he gives a sigh of relief. He goes to the desk, puts Dent's confession back into the files, and turns over his memo pad.

On the pad is written in red:

> The X day, second month of the year *Chi-hai*,
> interview with Elliot, British consul.

Lin decides to make careful preparations before meeting this chief of the British opium dealers tomorrow. He bestirs himself and takes from his lute-table the copies of the *Macao Daily* which his interpreters translate from English for him every day, as well

as other documents relating to foreign affairs. He trims the oil lamp, puts on his glasses and starts reading steadily.

Scattered on the desk are a dozen open books and newspapers, as well as an ink-stone and the vermilion brush with which the commissioner signs documents. But whoever was reading here is no longer at the desk.

Spread on the brick-paved ground beside the desk is a map of Asia and Europe some ten feet wide. Lin has taken off his shoes to squat on the map. With a green oil lamp in one hand, a magnifying glass in the other, he slowly traces the shipping route of the British vessels coming to China. The magnifying glass stops near Pohai Bay and Taku Harbour and focuses on the words, "From India to Tientsin X knots."

Apparently the commissioner has reached some conclusion. He blows out the lamp and stands up.

Morning light glints through the coloured window-panes to fall on him, turning his clothes all the colours of the rainbow.

Lin's eyelids are heavy; but he rubs his eyes and feels alert again.

The gloom in the hall is being scattered by several rays of sunlight. Lin strides to the door, then opens all the windows. Sunlight flows in like a flood breaking through a dyke, to inundate the whole room. He walks to the corridor to welcome the sun and bask in its rays. Stroking his beard, he looks round with a smile of content.

The spring flowers are bright as embroidery. The trees are fresh and green. The bright sunny day is sparkling with vitality.

Lin avidly breathes in the fresh air. Then he strikes a pose and leisurely starts his boxing exercises.

CHAPTER V

1

The double doors of the great hall stand wide open. The way from the outer court to the Unicorn Gate is flanked by guards,

attendants and soldiers, drawn up in proud, orderly array. Lin Tse-hsu is seated in state in the middle of the hall in an arm-chair covered with a tiger skin. On either side eight mahogany arm-chairs are symmetrically placed and Teng Ting-chen, Kuan Tien-pei, Yu Kun and others are seated in due order.

An attendant announces, "Mr. Elliot, the British consul, is here to pay his respects to the high commissioner!"

Elliot in ceremonial dress, with a red sash, ascends the steps from the court and enters the hall, accompanied by three assistants. In the centre of his group, Elliot walks with stiff decorum towards the high commissioner. Lin rises calmly to receive him.

Elliot and his assistants halt and bow. Lin does not accept this salutation face to face, but moves to the left and returns his salute with clasped hands raised to his brow.

Outside the Unicorn Gate are two tables opposite each other, one for the host, one for the guest. The Chinese and British officials take their places to left and right according to precedence for the conference.

Lin invites Elliot to be seated and says quietly, "I wished to see you today to inquire what steps you have taken for handing over the opium."

Elliot smiles politely. "As Her Britannic Majesty's consul, I have always considered trading in opium as immoral. I have never instructed the merchants to engage in this traffic."

Lin smiles too. "Nevertheless, the British merchants have the longest record of large-scale opium dealing. This is universally known."

Elliot replies evasively, "That is the merchants' affair. . . ." He changes the subject. "It has come to my knowledge that many officials of your honourable country have connived at the smuggling of opium to enrich themselves. That accounts for the daily increase in the trade." His glance rests as if by accident on Yu Kun.

Kuan Tien-pei, sitting above Yu Kun, turns to glare at him. The inspector-general takes a pinch of snuff and pretends not to notice.

The foreign assistants are secretly delighted.

Lin hits back. "Since time immemorial opium has never been cultivated in our celestial empire. But your government, anxious to make large profits even at the expense of others, has encouraged your merchants to smuggle the drug into China. Therefore, in your capacity as British consul here, it is incumbent upon you to see that your merchants surrender all their opium."

Elliot, coldly: "The only duty incumbent upon me is the protection of our merchants."

Lin rises to his feet in indignation. "You want to protect your merchants; but this poisonous drug could bring about the destruction of my country and its people. I have the lives of millions of my countrymen to consider." He voices his fixed determination. "As high commissioner, I will not leave Canton until this trading in opium is ended once and for all."

His just denunciation impresses the whole gathering. There is utter silence.

Teng Ting-chen and Kuan Tien-pei are so moved that tears gleam in their eyes.

Elliot's assistants glance sidewise at Lin Tse-hsu and whisper a few words to each other.

To extricate himself from this predicament, Elliot pretends to be helpless. Shrugging his shoulders, he says, "Since the high commissioner insists that the opium be handed over, I will of course do what I can. However, since our chief opium merchant has sailed for home. . . ." He spreads his hands. "I'm afraid there is nothing I can do."

"But I understand that Dent is still here." Lin gives an inscrutable smile.

"Oh, no. He has gone home," says Elliot confidently.

"Indeed? What if he were still here?" Lin asks with a smile.

"In that case, of course, I could pass on your instructions to him," Elliot retorts politely.

"Very well, then. Please do so." The commissioner turns to his men. "Bring Dent here!"

Elliot can hardly believe his ears. He turns suddenly pale.

Dent is brought in by runners. He has taken off the Chinese gown and jacket of his last night's disguise. In waistcoat and shirt sleeves, he is a sorry sight.

This is a bolt from the blue. The English officials stare in dismay.

Elliot is both alarmed and indignant. His mortification turns to fury.

Kuan Tien-pei and the others, very much delighted, find it hard not to laugh.

Dent hangs his head in shame and pique.

Lin strokes his beard, calmly watching Elliot's reaction.

Biting his lips to restrain his anger, Elliot decides to counterattack. He stands up and protests vehemently. "As Her Britannic Majesty's consul to China, I protest against this unwarranted detention of a British subject."

Lin remains unruffled and answers with good reason, "Dent may be a British national, but he has violated the law of China. I have given repeated orders for the surrender of opium, but he had the temerity to oppose them and try to escape." He grows more heated. "Now you, as British consul, are attempting to shield him. What do you mean by it, eh?"

Elliot has nothing to say. He sits down angrily.

Lin speaks more calmly, putting his case strongly. "My sole object is to finish this trading in opium. You may take this man away. I give you three more days to hand over all the opium." His words fall clearly and incisively. "If by then my order is still not complied with, I shall have your factory sealed up until it is."

Lin rises abruptly. All the others stand up too.

Like the rogue he is, Elliot retorts truculently, "I declare that if our interests are jeopardized, we reserve the right to take the necessary action."

Lin is not impressed. "As you please." He takes up his covered tea bowl.

Seeing this, the attendants shout, "Show the guests out!"

Elliot has no choice but to bow and leave with his assistants.

2

Outside the foreign factories no passers-by can be seen. Chinese sentries armed with red-tasselled lances stand guard at intervals of five or ten paces.

Title: "Three days later."

A sitting-room overlooking the street in the foreign factories.

A ruffianly opium merchant with a vicious expression, blunderbuss in hand, is scowling at the Chinese sentries outside. Some of the foreigners in the room are holding noisy discussions in small groups, others are toping dejectedly by themselves.

The ruffian brandishes his gun and turns to shout, "Gentlemen! We must force our way out!" He leads the way towards the hall.

Instantly the others leap up, seizing the shot-guns and sabres on the wall to follow him.

In the hall other merchants are gambling.

The charge led by the ruffian interrupts the game. He waves his gun and cries, "Gentlemen! We're going to rush them!"

Men gather from all sides, eager to make the attempt.

A short elderly man stops them. "Don't do it! That would just be asking for trouble."

The crowd shout:

"What shall we do then?"

"Are we to stay cooped up here for ever?"

The older man says, "Go and see Elliot. Make him protest to the Chinese."

The foreign merchants clamour:

"He's right!"

"That's the idea."

"Let's see Elliot!"

"He must find a way out for us."

Urging each other on, they rush upstairs pell-mell to Elliot's room. Countless fists hammer on the door. There is a clamour of voices. . . .

The door remains firmly closed. On the other side there is dead silence.

The sun is bright outside, but the curtains here are drawn. Pale tongues of flame rise from the guttering candles.

Elliot, hair tousled, is bent over his desk writing. He pauses to glance at the door which is being knocked and battered from the other side, but he appears indifferent and apathetic. He

decides to pay no attention. With lowered head he concentrates on what he is writing.

He is obviously considering a complex problem. He hesitates, puts down his pen and studies the military map of China on the wall. He strides lightly over to examine the position of certain cities near the coast of Kwangtung and Fukien. Having drawn red circles round Canton and Amoy, he swiftly and forcefully links them with a red line. His rapacious eyes glitter with confidence.

He returns to the desk as if some great deed were accomplished. His eyes light on the portrait of Queen Victoria on the wall.

In his breast burn ambitions of military conquest and pride in his loyalty to the throne. Softly he invokes the portrait of the queen, "Ah, Your Majesty, your great dream is about to come true."

He sits down elatedly and taking up a quill pen swiftly signs his name on a letter.

One passage in the letter reads as follows:

> . . . I am fully in agreement with Hugh Hamilton Lindsay's strategy for hostilities against China as outlined by him in his proposal in 1835. I entreat Her Majesty's government to take immediate action so as not to miss this splendid opportunity. . . .

Elliot reads this letter with satisfaction, sprays it with powder and addresses the envelope.

The door of the next room is opened. Dent slips in, a worried look on his face, and leans against the door to ask listlessly, "Charles, have you thought the matter over yet?"

Elliot seems not to hear him as he folds his letter.

Dent says pleadingly, "I'm willing to hand over one thousand chests of opium if I can regain my freedom. . . . Even fifteen hundred. . . ."

"I have given considerable thought to the matter," Elliot answers casually. "You will surrender all the opium in your possession."

"What!" Dent is flabbergasted. He bounds forward to protest loudly, "Our losses would be fantastic. I can't do that!"

Elliot tosses down the letter and says contemptuously, "All you merchants can think about is money, money, money. . . ."

His pride wounded, Dent protests, "No, we value the honour of our empire too. . . ."

Elliot interrupts, "All right then. For the honour of our empire, I want you to do something. . . ."

Dent hesitates before acquiescing, "Very well."

"After surrendering your shipments of opium, you will be free to leave." Elliot hands him the letter. "I want you to take this immediately to London. Deliver it to Mr. Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary. . . ."

Dent looks at the envelope and understands. He inquires confidentially, "Is this a request to our government for a punitive force to be sent to China?"

Elliot smiles but makes no answer.

Realizing that his guess is correct, Dent grows wildly excited. He declares with feeling, "At last! This has long been the wish of our hearts! You are a tremendous fellow. You will be opening the gate of the East for the great civilization of the West." He is practically embracing Elliot.

Not unmoved by this flattery, Elliot rejoins affably, "And from now on you too will have a share in this great cause."

He holds out his hand. Dent clasps it firmly.

Elliot appears in the balcony overlooking the hall.

The merchants assemble hastily from different parts of the factory to listen to the consul's instructions.

Elliot watches them impassively till the tumult dies down. He speaks slowly and formally, "I wish to notify you that all British merchants are instructed to hand over their shipments of opium to the Chinese government without further delay. Her Majesty's government will give compensation for resultant losses. . . ."

This sudden decision causes pandemonium. The merchants fire questions at the consul.

3

Humen. Hills in the shape of a horseshoe surround the bay. Small islands can be seen dotting the sea.

The green, tree-clad hills are a mass of men and bright flags, transforming the scene.

The big drum for the Lion Dance is four or five feet across. Short thick drum-sticks are beating a vigorous tattoo.

Title: "June 3, 1839."

A magnificent "Lion Head" made in bright materials is carried high. Beneath it Mai Kuan is dancing. He has put on festival costume and a coloured belt and is dancing exultantly in time with the drumming and gonging, to the sound of fire-crackers. Long strings of fire-crackers are tossed at him, and he lowers the Lion Head to ward them off. The fire-crackers fall to the ground and his brightly shod feet leap up and down amid the tongues of flame and sulphur fumes.

Not far off a young fellow wearing the mask of a "Fat Boy" is waving a palm-leaf fan as if to fan away the smoke or play with the Lion.

Under a large banner embroidered with the words "The Awakened Lion," Kuang Tung-shan beats the big drum with all his might.

Mai Kuan's wife is among the excited spectators. The "Fat Boy" shades his eyes with the palm-leaf fan to look round. Catching sight of her, he bounds over to make her join in. Liang San puts on her head the mask of a "Fat Girl" with rouged cheeks. With a merry laugh she acquiesces and dances gaily with the "Fat Boy," forming one pair, each chasing the other, backwards and forwards.

An old woman with a child in her arms is beaming with pleasure.

The fun is at its height when someone points to the distance and gives an exclamation of pleased surprise. "Look, the high commissioner has come!"

"Commissioner Lin has come!"

Word flies from one to another, from one hill-top to another. At once on all the hill-sides far and near and along the shore, heads are turned and raised. It seems as if mountains are rising up or oceans spilling over.

In the centre of a horseshoe-shaped valley a ceremonial platform has been erected. It has the Unicorn Canopy and red carpet,

lanterns and coloured decorations. On both sides of the hill are posted sentries of the Green Battalion. To the left of the platform on a towering flag-pole hangs a long yellow silk pennant, bearing the inscription: "High Commissioner Lin, Imperial Inspector of Canton Harbour, Commander of All Naval and Land Forces."

Lin Tse-hsu mounts the platform slowly with Teng Ting-chen and Kuan Tien-pei. The hills resound with jubilant cheering. Lin nods from time to time in reply, his eyes on the bay at the foot of the hill.

On the shore several pits a hundred and fifty feet square have been dug for the destruction of the opium. These are surrounded by wooden palisades and connected by channels to the sea. One after another, a long file of porters carry chests of opium on poles towards the pits. . . .

When Kuang Tung-shan sees Lin Tse-hsu in the distance, he drums more vigorously than ever, with strokes swift as rain.

And swift as rain picks and axes smash down on the chests of "company opium." As they burst open, balls of opium roll out.

The pits are spanned by long gangways along which file porters, some with baskets of lime, others with opium. They empty their loads into the pits.

Soldiers with long bamboo poles mix the opium with lime.

On the platform, Admiral Kuan steps forward to signal with a flag.

A row of guns festooned with coloured silk fire salvoes.

The sluice-gates of the opium pits are opened and sea water rushes in.

With a great seething and bubbling the lime dissolves.

White smoke rises over the pits.

The villagers raise their *sona* and blow so hard that the veins stand out on their temples.

Joyfully they beat huge copper cymbals more than two feet across.

Coloured Lions are prancing madly around the burning opium.

The white smoke from the pits turns into clouds and drifts away with the wind.

The hills are covered with cheering onlookers waving handkerchiefs, straw hats, farm tools, weapons and flags.

Mai Kuan's wife removes her "Fat Girl" mask and laughs, perspiration running down her face.

Drunk with joy, Kuang Tung-shan holds up his little grandson.

Only the dozen or so foreigners who are watching the proceedings from the slope by the platform seem lackadaisical. They came thinking the destruction of opium would prove a farce. Now, after what they have seen, they are secretly impressed by Lin Tse-hsu.

Taking Teng's hand, Lin walks to the edge of the platform. Tears rise to Teng's eyes at the sight of this jubilant crowd.

The foreign merchants accompanied by an interpreter approach the platform, take off their hats and stand stiffly to greet the high commissioner. The foremost bows and says, "Allow us to pay our respects."

Lin replies cordially, "Our sole intention is to prohibit opium, we are not prohibiting trade. As long as you sign a guarantee not to deal in opium, your ships can enter the harbour tomorrow." The merchants nod, pleased.

The British ships lie at anchor out in the bay.

On deck, British merchants leaving Canton climb up rope ladders or on to the bridge and cabin roofs to look at Humen and the mainland.

Elliot is leaning over the side of the boat, watching angrily. George stands behind him.

From the hill across the sea thick eddies of smoke are rising and a vague tumult can be heard.

Elliot says gloomily, "Ask the captain to put out to sea."

"Right," says George. He steps closer to whisper, "Another three thousand chests of opium arrived yesterday. What shall we do with them?"

Elliot's answer is ready. "Sell them at the lowest prices to the Chinese opium dealers. We're going to fight this out with Lin Tse-hsu."

"Right," says George, and withdraws.

Elliot watches the columns of smoke across the sea and says contemptuously, "Burn away. . . . The day is coming when I shall spread that fire all over Canton. . . ."

CHAPTER VI

1

London in the fog. The Thames.
Title: "London."

The office of the British Foreign Secretary, Palmerston.

A large room with big mosaic window-panes reaching to the ceiling, a massive fireplace and marble pillars. . . . Around the broad conference table are seated nine gentlemen: Palmerston and several prominent bankers and business men. Dent, newly returned from China, is also present. He is vehemently making his report.

Narration: "After Dent's return to London, he and many other capitalists immediately conferred with Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, to plot a war of aggression against China. . . ."

As Palmerston listens, he is studying a document on which is written:

. . . .
One flagship, 74 guns, complement 500
One heavy man-of-war, complement 300
Two light men-of-war, complement 200
. . . .

Narration: ". . . Palmerston forwarded the plan for war drafted four years earlier by Hugh Hamilton Lindsay, a British opium merchant, to the cabinet for discussion. . . ."

At the meeting, a member of the opposition rises to speak against the immediate adoption of a policy of force.

Narration: ". . . Some men contested the plan on the grounds that this would be an unjust war and that the Chinese people might rise to fight back. . . ."

Dent sits with the other capitalists and they consult in low voices. With specious and reactionary arguments they attempt to refute the opposition.

Narration: " . . . But the British capitalists saw clearly that a cessation of the opium trade would mean a loss of one-sixth of the annual revenue of Britain and India. . . ."

Palmerston stands up to summarize the discussion and support the arguments of those in favour of war. All the gentlemen present express satisfaction, determined to bring about this nefarious war as quickly as possible.

Narration: ". . . Therefore, with the approval of Queen Victoria, Palmerston and his clique made active preparations for a war of aggression against China, eagerly anticipating prompt parliamentary sanction."

2

Weiyuan Fort with mountains at its back and the sea in front. Tiers of gun emplacements on the cliff are like a staircase to the sea. Guards supervise the construction of the fortress by thousands of labourers, both men and women. The hill is seething with activity. People come and go continuously, weeding, carrying earth and transporting guns.

At the foot of the slope several brand-new guns are lying on some timber waiting to be pulled up the hill. The gradient is steep, the earth loose and slippery, and the round guns weigh nearly ten thousand catties. Mai Kuan's wife and several dozen other men and women are divided into work teams to haul the big guns with thick ropes. Mai Kuan and other strong men, armed with thick bamboo poles, prop up the guns from behind to prevent their slipping. Someone starts to sing heave-ho and hundreds of voices join in. Using every ounce of strength, they inch up the hill-side. . . .

Kuan Tien-pei is inspecting the work with Sun Chang-ching.

Half-way up the hill is an ox-hide tent where officials can stop to rest. Lin Tse-hsu and Teng Ting-chen emerge from the tent.

Kuan hastens towards them eagerly, and pointing proudly to the big gun being pulled up shouts slowly and clearly, "Look, Commissioner! Our new eight-thousand-catty gun." He is smiling broadly.

Lin looks at the great gun and nods approval.

Mai Kuan, stripped to the waist and dripping with sweat, clenches his teeth as he uses the bamboo pole as a lever. He strains forward inch by inch.

His wife and the others haul the ropes. Nearly bent double, they progress inch by inch. The rope starts fraying.

The rope snaps.

Mai Kuan's wife falls.

The big gun starts to roll down the hill.

The eight-thousand-catty weight on Mai Kuan's shoulder makes him stagger.

Lin Tse-hsu and the others are startled, fearing an accident.

But Mai Kuan steadies himself and exerts all his strength to raise the pole. Drawing a deep breath, he succeeds in halting the gun.

The workers in front tug hard. Mai Kuan's wife leaps up and catches hold of the broken end of the rope.

Mai Kuan shouts, "Come on, everyone! Pull!"

They strain so hard that the gun seems to have lost weight suddenly, for it trundles easily up the slope.

Someone calls, "All right. We can rest now." The workers slow down.

Seeing the danger averted, Lin lets out a sigh of relief.

Kuan says approvingly, "These young people have pluck!"

Mai Kuan's wife throws down the rope, panting. Her husband hurries over to pass her a handkerchief and ask with concern, "Hurt yourself?" She smiles reassuringly and shakes her head.

Lin Tse-hsu finds the young couple's faces familiar. Gradually he remembers that he took their boat when he first came to Canton and went out incognito to investigate. He begins to take an interest in them.

Sun Chang-ching knows them well. Pointing out Mai Kuan, he says, "That fellow once climbed up the mast of a foreign boat, tore down the foreign devils' flag and burnt it."

Lin nods approvingly. "A man of spirit!" Much moved by the thousands of civilians working on the hill, he mutters to himself, "Yes, the people's enthusiasm is of great value."

A bugle on the hill sounds for work to stop. It is the hour for the midday meal.

As Mai Kuan, his wife and the rest start down the hill, Lin calls, "Here! Come over for a moment, will you?"

Mai Kuan hesitates, doubting whether he has heard correctly. He can hardly believe a high commissioner wants to speak to him. His wife mistrusts all officials and is afraid something unpleasant may happen. Kuang Tung-shan, also on his way down after work, runs over to his daughter to see what the matter is.

Mai Kuan walks over to Lin Tse-hsu, who says approvingly, "Seems you're pretty strong, eh?" He points to the flag-pole seventy or eighty feet high in front of the tent and smiles. "Could you climb that flag-pole?"

Mai Kuan looks at it. "Why, easy."

Lin is in high spirits. "All right then, have a try." He calls to a guard, "Give him a hat and see if he can place it on the top." He turns to smile broadly at Teng and the rest, tickled with his idea.

Mai Kuan takes the red-tasselled hat from the guard, grips it between his teeth and in one leap gets about ten feet up the pole. Holding the pole with one hand, he clambers up.

Men in the valley and on the hills raise their heads. Hundreds of eyes are on this pole which rears up towards the sky. Mai Kuan climbs swiftly and easily, hand over hand, as if crawling on all fours on level ground, until he reaches the top.

A long pennant is fluttering there against the blue sky and white clouds. Mai Kuan places the red-tasselled hat on top of the pole.

Lin looks up, shading his eyes, laughing like a child.

Mai Kuan shins half way down, then drops suddenly turning a somersault.

Lin cries out in alarm, but calms down upon seeing that this is simply a stunt.

Mai Kuan jumps lightly down and stands there in silence.

Lin Tse-hsu and Teng exchange admiring glances. Mai Kuan walks over. Eager to have the services of this fine fellow, the commissioner asks, "Would you like to join the army?"

Mai Kuan prefers to steer clear of officials. He shakes his head.

"Why not?"

"I have old and young at home to take care of."

Lin smiles at Mai Kuan's wife and says quite informally, "I know. You have a wife and a baby still in arms."

In astonishment Mai Kuan turns to his wife.

After staring at Lin for some moments, she recognizes him and tells her father in pleased surprise, "Why, the high commissioner once hired our boat!"

Kuang Tung-shan nods cheerfully and strides towards the tent.

A guard shouts at him, "What are you doing? Stand back!"

Kuan Tien-pei sees that this is someone exceptional and signs to the guard.

Lin looks at Kuang. "Have you something to say to us, old fellow?"

Kuang steps forward and bows with clasped hands. "Your Excellency, you have done a fine job," he says warmly. "We feel a lot better since the burning of opium at Humen."

Lin smiles. "What is your name?"

Kuang makes no attempt at concealment. "Kuang Tung-shan."

Remembering the first occasion on which he heard this name, Lin regrets that he hasn't met this man earlier. He says with delight, "Wasn't it you who stopped the foreigner Dent's escaping?"

Kuang nods and says heartily, "If you want to hit back at those foreigners, Your Excellency, we'll go through fire or swords for you." He looks round with pride at the thousands of workers on the hill and below it.

Very struck by him, Lin signs to him to enter. "Good, you are a man after my own heart. Come on in. I would like to have a talk with you."

3

The Forbidden City in Peking. The inner palace.

The emperor and Mu Chang-ngo are alone in the magnificent and tranquil hall discussing state affairs in private.

Mu Chang-ngo, prostrating himself, reports: ". . . This time the foreigners have handed over the opium in accordance with the imperial decree. This can only be accounted for by Your Majesty's great good fortune which knows no bounds and the protection of our heavenly ancestors. . . ."

Emperor Tao Kuang is rather pleased. "Hum. Lin Tse-hsu has not done badly." This success has gone to his head. It seems to him that China is after all the Celestial Empire, far superior to

foreign lands and with no need for them. Therefore he orders firmly, "Instruct Lin Tse-hsu to take advantage of this opportunity to drive all the foreigners out. They will not be allowed to do business in China in future. In this way we shall have less trouble."

Mu Chang-ngo mutters assent. Falling in with the emperor's mood, he changes his tune and touches deftly on a different subject. "The foreigners have submitted. However, troops are still being trained and defences constructed at Canton. In your servant's opinion, this is rather superfluous."

Sensing some hidden meaning, the emperor prompts him, "Well?"

As chief councillor, Mu Chang-ngo decides to pour out his heart. "Now Lin Tse-hsu and Teng Ting-chen are in command of the army and have the support of the local people. I would advise circumspection, Your Majesty."

The emperor thinks this over. Then, grown suddenly stern, he asks softly, "Have you heard something?"

Mu replies hesitantly, "According to a letter from Yu Kun. . . ." He pauses to watch the emperor's reaction.

Emperor Tao Kuang shows concern. "What did he say?"

Mu pretends to be naive. He kowtows and answers, "I hardly dare mention these rumours, but Yu Kun has sent me some lampoons made by the people of Canton. Would Your Majesty care to read one? . . ." He draws a manuscript from his sleeve and presents it with both hands to the emperor.

The emperor reads:

> Our land is vast but it is poor;
> His Excellency Teng is in command of the eastern coast;
> All day he sends officers out to make arrests;
> Guilty and innocent alike are taken.
> In the name of doing away with evil practices,
> They are filling their own pockets;
> By the time the opium trade is at an end,
> You, too, will be brought to book.

The emperor flies into a temper. "Hum!" Pounding the arms of his throne, he jumps to his feet. Mu Chang-ngo hastily

prostrates himself touching the ground with his forehead, not daring to raise his eyes.

The emperor strides up and down in front of the throne. After a silence he asks, "What do you think? Shall we recall Lin Tse-hsu?"

Mu Chang-ngo raises his head to answer after a show of deliberation, "Finding someone suitable to clear up the trouble in Canton may be hard."

"What do you think should be done then?" The emperor wants him to suggest a plan.

Mu proposes, "I suggest that they be separated first."

The emperor nods slowly, then orders decisively, "Good. We'll transfer Teng Ting-chen to Fukien."

4

Humen, the old fortress on the coast.

A wall meandering along the winding coast undulates up and down with the hills. Every hundred feet or so there is a fort. That at the top of the hill flies a triangular flag bearing the name "Lin." Sentries keep watch there day and night. This is the front line of the coastal defence.

Lin is standing by the wall looking out to sea. Teng, seated on a grey rock, is reading the court bulletin with a worried expression. "Ah," he sighs. "The emperor has changed his mind. It seems that I will have to leave here."

Lin remains silent, still gazing out to sea. Wild waves are lashing the reefs. Although outwardly calm, his heart is in as great a tumult as the tide. He says despondently, "Elliot is still devising ways to smuggle opium across the sea, yet there are men at court who think that all is well and that they can rest their heads in peace." Giving vent to his pent-up feelings, he goes on vehemently, "We never know when British troops may turn up in force. Then we shall find ourselves in difficult straits!"

Teng nods with a heavy heart, staring gloomily out to sea. "Sooner or later, war is certain. . . ."

"It's not war I'm afraid of!" declares Lin passionately. "What I fear is a sudden change in the attitude of the court. Then we

should be under fire from two sides. If that happens, everything we have achieved in banning opium will be completely undone. . . ."

Teng has met with so many reversals in his time that he is easily disheartened. He says frankly, "We shall soon be in a position where we can neither go forward nor retreat. We'd better not try to swim against the tide. . . ."

Lin thinks for a while, his eyes on a pine erect on the cliff braving the wind and looking proudly down over hills and sea. He rejoins earnestly, "Only in a strong wind can the strength of the reed be seen. This is no time for us to think solely of our own safety. Shall we address a memorial to the throne? . . ."

Teng suggests dubiously, "Or ask the emperor's permission to defend Kwangtung together? . . ."

Lin weighs his reply carefully. "No, to my mind you should proceed to Fukien as soon as possible."

Teng is somewhat puzzled. "Why? . . ."

"Fukien and Kwangtung adjoin each other," Lin explains. "In the event of a foreign invasion we need someone capable there to deal with the situation. . . . Preparations should be made in good time in Shantung, Chihli, Kiangsu and Chekiang too."

Teng nods several times, convinced.

They climb the steps up the mountain and look at the magnificent scenery in the distance. On the hill-side they see about a hundred civilian workers busily shifting guns. Teng sighs over a task unfinished. "A pity . . . I shall not be here to see the fortress completed."

Knowing Teng's love of doing a good job, Lin says, "Don't worry, I'll see that the guns are in place before you leave."

In good spirits the two old friends walk up the steps side by side.

The Weiyuan Fort.

Bright flags all over the hill present a brave sight. The new eight-thousand-catty gun is imposing in its emplacement, its gleaming barrel festooned with red and green silk. Gunners stand proudly at their posts.

Buglers in full uniform are blowing long bugles. The deep notes echo through the hills. Ocean and sky seem to stretch to infinity.

From the masts of official boats moored at the wharf flutter pennants with the words "A Fair Wind, Smooth Sailing."

Wrapped in a cape, Teng is standing at the prow. He clasps his hands to thank the high officials who have come to see him off. The attendant behind him calls out, "The high commissioner asks all officials to take their departure now."

Teng waves his hand before entering the cabin with Lin.

Inside the cabin.

As soon as they sit down, Teng grasps Lin's hand earnestly. "Anything else?"

Lin smiles ruefully. "Just remember what I said before. Fukien and Kwangtung are side by side. Our lives and families can only be safe if the coastal defences are in good order. Always remember that."

Determined to take up his new appointment now, Teng replies cheerfully, "Don't worry." He regards Lin thoughtfully. "Now the whole responsibility for Canton devolves on you."

Lin nods gravely and slowly takes from his pocket an envelope addressed to Mrs. Lin, née Cheng, of Houkuan, Fukien.* Giving this to Teng he says, "After you arrive in Fukien, will you please send this letter to my wife? . . ." He cannot hide his emotion. "Tell her that I mean to retire and go home when this important task is completed."

Teng reassures him. "Don't worry. I'll see that she gets it."

Silence.

An attendant enters, salutes them and asks, "Shall we start, Your Honour?"

Teng is rather surprised. "Why not?"

"The wind is against us."

Teng and Lin stand up to look at the shore. By the sandy river bank long rows of men are hauling boats. They are wading in the water, straining against the current. . . .

Lin is deeply moved. With a wry smile he thinks of his own predicament. "I'm afraid the wind's going to be against us too most of the time. . . ." Tears spring to his eyes as he says warmly, "Take good care of yourself, Ting-chen."

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* Lin Tse-hsu was a native of Fukien.

Teng is evidently in great distress. His moustache quivers. Not trusting himself to speak, he pats Lin's shoulder with a hand that trembles.

The two men stand close together for some seconds without a word, swaying gently in their grief at parting. . . . An attendant kneels to present a tray with two goblets of wine. Each takes a goblet and raises it by both handles to his eyes. Having drained the wine, they tilt the cups to show that not a drop is left. . . .

Lin raises clasped hands to his brow and makes a deep bow. To hide the tears in his eyes he turns away and hurries out of the cabin. . . .

Teng sees him out and bows low, then closes his eyes to utter a silent prayer for him.

In the distance boatmen are shouting, "Let her go now!"

The wall which winds up the hill has some hundred steps which scale the cliff like a ladder up to heaven, affording a view over the great river.

Without stopping for breath, Lin climbs swiftly up . . . up to the top of the cliff to look down at the river.

On the hill are the old fortress, white clouds, the autumn wind. . . .

Down below are golden sand, flowing water, the white sail of Teng's boat receding slowly. . . .

Lin climbs further, yet further . . . to yet higher peaks.

He runs to the old pine amid the white clouds and gazes down at the river.

The river winds like a belt. Teng's boat rounds a bend and is gradually lost to sight.

Lin stares after it with longing, through tears.

Bugles, drums and cymbals sound from the hill where soldiers are drilling. Lin looks back. The stirring sight on the drill-ground absorbs him utterly.

His depression vanishes. In high spirits he hurries down the hill again.

At the foot of the hill, troops in highly polished helmets and breastplates are drilling. One new gun after another is being tested.

Lin swiftly descends the slope to plunge into the crowd.

CHAPTER VII

1

The South China Sea, a vast stretch of ocean and sky. Squadrons of three-masted British men-of-war are approaching.

A large aggressive force comprising twenty-five thousand marines and twenty-six warships is bearing down upon Kwang-tung.

Narration: "Under the pretext of protecting the interests of her merchants, the British government in April 1840 despatched a large naval force to invade China."

Eagle-eyed sentries in the watch-tower on the cliff are keeping a sharp look-out. Upon sighting the enemy boats, buglers sound the alarm.

Copper gongs boom out on the hill.

The marines of the Roc Battalion rush to the beach like a surging tide and climb to high places to watch. . . .

The strait between Shakok and Taikok is blocked with wooden palisades of different heights, as well as the masts of sunken vessels. In addition, two iron chains bar access to the river.

The large British fleet has sent two ships in advance to reconnoitre.

Elliot, the chief instigator of the opium-smuggling, has come with the vanguard of armed aggression because he knows the local conditions.

Twenty big guns are mounted at regular intervals along both sides of the deck. There are an additional twenty-eight guns below, the portholes for them crowded densely together. The marines on deck and below have cleaned the barrels, made ready powder charges, heated their rods and completed preparations for action.

Elliot in the uniform of a naval captain is standing on the bridge with his telescope. "What's our course now?" he asks.

The officer on duty behind him answers, "North nor'east."

Knowing that they are nearing Humen, Elliot raises his telescope.

The sea near the Humen Fort is criss-crossed with palisades. All is quiet, however. Not a man is in sight. There is not a movement on the nearby hills.

Elliot mutters to himself in surprise, "It's odd that there's no movement. . . ." Then through his telescope he sees two fishing boats bobbing on the waves near by calmly lowering their nets.

Elliot's suspicions are aroused. He tells the officer on duty, "Report to the flag-ship and stop our advance."

The order is given.

Elliot turns to tell his subordinate quietly, "Fetch the men in those boats here. Be courteous about it."

The other assents and hurries down from the bridge to the front deck.

A Chinese traitor dressed like a merchant in a blue gown and cap is cringing on the gangway. He approaches the officer with a sycophantic smile. The Englishman beckons. "This way!" The traitor follows him meekly.

Four different pairs of feet tread the polished oak deck. A pair of Cantonese-style slippers made of English camlet swagger in front; two pairs of wet, sunburnt bare feet follow hesitantly; while two black, glossy British army boots noisily bring up the rear. . . .

The Chinese traitor calls, "They're here! They're coming. This way! . . ." He leads the two fishermen, one old and one young, towards Elliot, who is just descending from the bridge. With a servile smile the traitor says, "It was very difficult to get them to come."

From the step Elliot scrutinizes the men. "Are you fishermen?" he asks cordially.

"Yes."

He points to the younger and asks the older man, "He is your. . . ?"

"My son," comes the answer.

"Are you familiar with these waters?"

"Yes, I know them well."

"Are you willing to guide us in?" Elliot speaks affably.

"How much will you pay?"

"Three hundred dollars." Elliot takes a heavy bag from his subordinate and weighs it in his hand. The silver dollars jingle. He tosses the bag to the old fisherman.

The old fisherman takes it and turns. Then the audience can see that he is Kuang Tung-shan and with him is Mai Kuan. Kuang opens the bag and takes out the dollars to count them.

Elliot adds with a smile, "When we reach Canton, I shall make you officials under this Mr. Chang here." He points to the Chinese traitor, who is waiting submissively by him with bowed head.

The traitor, feeling honoured, shows his teeth in a sickly smile. Then he turns his head with a haughty look to conduct Kuang Tung-shan to the helm. "Come along!"

Kuang Tung-shan and Mai Kuan prepare to go with him.

Elliot stops Mai Kuan. "Wait a minute. Your son will stay here." He makes a sign to the crew.

Armed marines step forward and lead Mai Kuan aft to hold him as a hostage.

Elliot smiles smugly.

Kuang gives him a hard look before going to the helm.

The helm. An English helmsman at the wheel is gazing ahead.

Kuang Tung-shan, standing in front to the right, signs with his hand to show what course to steer. . . .

The man-of-war passes through the palisades and reaches open water. The fortress can be seen more distinctly now, but still nothing is stirring.

Elliot looks round dubiously and mutters to himself, "It's strange that there is still no movement at all. . . ."

The huge prow of the advancing ship cleaves the water like an axe.

The ship's belly is moving towards a hidden reef.

On the bridge Elliot is raising his telescope when, crash!—the ship heels over to the right.

Elliot and his men are thrown down.

The helmsman is staggering. Kuang quickly fells him with a blow.

An old sailor frantically sounds the alarm. Seamen drop down from the rigging.

Elliot gets up and runs down from the bridge. Pointing to Kuang Tung-shan, he shouts, "Get that man!"

Mai Kuan darts forward from behind the ladder and trips Elliot up. He then runs past him and leaps up to the bridge.

The traitor hurries over to help Elliot up, asking hastily, "Mr. Elliot, you aren't hurt?"

Loathing this renegade, Mai Kuan has an idea. With a show of concern he shouts, "Chang! Run for it! I'll see you in Canton. . . ."

The traitor is giving a hand to Elliot, who is feeling a bump on his forehead. When the Englishman hears Mai Kuan, he thinks Chang has deceived him. He glares at the traitor with suspicion and grabs him by the collar. "Ha! So you're with them too!"

English seamen try to rush Mai Kuan, but he kicks two of them down. As others come on, he somersaults backwards into the sea.

Kuang Tung-shan, surrounded by British seamen, bounds to the gunwale. A sailor seizes him and will not let go. Kuang raises his heavy bag of money and smashes it down with all his force on the man's head.

The sailor falls with a cry. Kuang laughs aloud. Another group of British rush at him, but in a flash he too leaps into the blue waves.

Elliot shouts in fury, "Shoot! Shoot!"

Marines gather on the right side and open fire. Jets of water spurt up from the sea, but the two fishermen have disappeared under water.

On the deck, several British sailors truss Chang up with thick ropes.

Elliot bellows, "Throw him overboard!"

The traitor cries frantically, "It's a mistake! . . . I was sent by Wu Shao-jung. I came to help you. I swear it!" No one pays any attention. One brute of a seaman takes hold of his head while another seizes his legs. They carry him to the side.

The traitor cries desperately, "Spare me! Spare me!" The seamen let go and he falls into the sea, where his cries are choked by the waves.

2

The fort by the sea.

On the silent hills a flag is suddenly hoisted. It bears the character "Commander."

At once there is movement all along the wall winding up the hills, as if a sinuous dragon had awakened. Flags appear at the same instant far and near. Thousands of troops run out from under cover. They wave banners and raise a great shout which thunders through the hills.

Lin Tse-hsu in a purple cape, mounted on a white horse, appears before the old fort among his generals. When he ascertains through his telescope that the main enemy fleet is within range, he gives the order resolutely, "Fire!"

The signal-man raises high his flag.

Kuan Tien-pei on a height in the fort is looking uphill. He passes the order on to Sun Chang-ching beside him, "Fire!"

The gunners by several hundred emplacements in the front line have been waiting impatiently. At last they see the yellow signal flag flutter in the wind.

Tier upon tier of guns fire at the same moment.

More than twenty British warships are now close to Shakok. Shells rain around them, great spouts of water rise.

The British ships return the fire.

Taikok Fort is directly opposite Shakok. The Chinese troops have dug shelters in the hill with several dozen embrasures commanding the sea. Now from each of these belches flame.

The three-decker British flag-ship with seventy-four guns on each deck is like a floating fortress. From the massed guns above and below comes a steady rain of fire.

In the hold of the British ship the heat of the guns makes the temperature sweltering. Stripped to the waist and wearing short

pants the foreigners clean their guns, charge them and light the fuses. . . . Each explosion shakes the whole ship.

The Chinese troops let fly with a rain of shells, whipping the sea into waves so that the British ships are tossed up and down.

The lines of the British fleet begin to break.

Sea and air are a mass of sulphurous fumes. The churned-up water is hidden in a haze of smoke.

From the Chinese gun emplacements eight-thousand-catty guns roar out in unison.

Kuan Tien-pei, standing on a white gun emplacement, is taking careful aim.

The red mouth of one of the great guns belches fire. The explosion echoes far and near.

A ball of fire explodes on the deck of the British flag-ship, putting several guns on the starboard out of action. A fire starts on the deck.

Kuan laughs uproariously. Sun Chang-ching shouts, "Our big guns are terrific!" Locating the target he declares confidently, "Let's knock the masts down." He trains the gun on the target.

The barrel of the eight-thousand-catty gun mounts slowly. With a great roar it discharges another ball of fire.

The soaring mast of the British ship is smashed in two. The sails catch fire, the blaze spreading down like a huge red umbrella.

The British seamen on deck start milling round wildly and running for their lives.

The burning canvas scatters a shower of sparks. Tongues of fire lick over the deck and the bridge.

To escape from this cordon of fire the desperate seamen jump overboard.

The sea is crimson. . . . The burning ship is capsizing. The British fleet retreats.

A Union Jack flaps in the flames.

In front of his headquarters Lin Tse-hsu, watching the battle, is utterly carried away by the fight. "Well done! Well done!" he shouts excitedly, waving both arms in his delight, like a child.

Kuang Tung-shan and Mai Kuan hurry up a path from the sea.

Lin cries joyfully, "Here they come!"

The fishermen are wet through but in high spirits. They make haste to bow, and call out, "Commissioner!"

Lin promptly raises them and looks at them with affection. "Ah, you've had a hard time." He orders his men, "Bring wine!"

A guard presents a platter holding two large blue bowls filled with a potent brew. Lin presents these with both hands. "Have a drink!"

The two gallant fishermen take the drinks and drain them.

Lin raises a thumb in admiration. "Your fine services today will be duly acknowledged." He pours them more wine.

3

A coastal map of China in relief. The British fleet, its passage shown by arrows, withdraws from Canton to attack Amoy and Tinghai. After sparking fire there, the arrow-head thrust northward along the coast towards Taku Harbour and Tientsin.

Narration: "Having failed in their attempt to take Canton, the British invaders sailed northwards to capture Tinghai in the province of Chekiang. Then they divided their forces to attack Tientsin and menace the capital, Peking."

The British flag-ship, its guns raised threateningly, speeds straight forward. Like a dark cloud, the shadow of the ship blots out the whole screen.

4

The screen is in darkness. Gradually the flickering shadows of actresses appear.

Night. In the inner palace of the Forbidden City a *kunchu* opera is being performed. To melodious fluting and piping four fairies are dancing to wish the emperor long life. Palace maids are performing softly on stringed instruments behind the green bamboo curtain.

Emperor Tao Kuang, reclining on his throne, watches with interest.

Mu Chang-ngo and Chi Shan hurry in behind a eunuch. In confusion, they run up to the throne and kowtow.

The vexed emperor drawls, "Why do you look so worried?"

Mu Chang-ngo trembles and dares not raise his head. "Your Majesty, the foreigners have attacked Tientsin."

The emperor, taken by surprise, utters an involuntary cry of dismay.

The matter is too grave for Mu to conceal. ". . . Reports say they are marching on Peking."

The emperor changes colour and rises to his feet. "Coming to Peking?"

The singing and dancing continue to a high-pitched accompaniment. Tao Kuang, thoroughly provoked, thunders, "Stop that!" The terrified actresses rush to hide behind the curtain.

The palace maids behind the green bamboo curtain catch up their lutes, pipes and flutes and scatter in confusion.

More calmly but ominously the emperor asks Chi Shan, Governor of Chihli, "What exactly has happened?"

Chi Shan breaks it gently: "These foreigners have come to beg Your Majesty for some compensation for their opium."

"Nonsense!" The emperor has recovered his poise. "We owe them nothing."

Chi Shan seizes this chance to slander Lin. "It is said that when Lin Tse-hsu confiscated the foreigners' opium, he promised them compensation. But up till now nothing has been paid."

The emperor is shocked. "What! Is this true?"

Mu Chang-ngo assumes a look of indignation. "Your Majesty entrusted the important task of banning opium to Lin Tse-hsu. He not only failed in this task but he has also caused a great deal of trouble. . . ."

The emperor shakes his head and sighs. "Ah. . . . It is my own fault for trusting the wrong man."

Chi Shan is put out by this non-committal attitude. "Unless Your Majesty gives them a reply tomorrow, the foreigners threaten to open fire with their guns."

Tao Kuang says helplessly, "Ask them to return to Canton and tell them that Lin Tse-hsu will be punished severely. That should satisfy them, shouldn't it?"

Chi Shan falters, "Your Majesty shows great sagacity, but the foreigners demand compensation. . . ."

Tao Kuang, who is something of a miser, refuses this flatly. "You will instruct Lin Tse-hsu to pay them the money himself."

Chi Shan dares say no more, "Yes, Your Majesty!" He kowtows.

The emperor turns to consult Mu Chang-ngo. "Shall we send Chi Shan to Canton to settle this problem?"

Before Mu Chang-ngo can answer, Chi Shan gives a cry of dismay. "Me?"

The emperor frowns. "Are you afraid of the foreigners?"

Chi Shan takes a grip on himself. "Oh, no. . . . I thank Your Majesty for this mark of favour." He kowtows to accept the appointment.

Mu Chang-ngo and Chi Shan leave dejectedly.

The emperor notices that the stage is empty. He turns to ask, "Why don't you go on?"

The pipes and flutes sound once more, and the actresses come out again to continue their enchanting performance.

CHAPTER VIII

1

Canton's Number One Wharf.

By the bank is moored a row of official boats flying long pennants and coloured flags. Runners standing in a V formation in the prows hold placards with titles inscribed in gold on red lacquer: "The Governor of Chihli," "Grand Academician of the Wenyuan Pavilion" and so forth.

On the wharf are drawn up four orderly rows of guards. Officials civil and military stand respectfully by the steps.

From the Music Pavilion sounds music to welcome the guest. Stirring southern tunes are performed on the resonant *sona.*

Eight bearers carry a large sedan-chair draped in green felt from the boat, and proceed cautiously over the red carpet on the bank to convey the high commissioner to the Reception Pavilion.

Nine salvoes are fired.

There is the same ceremony and display as at the time of Lin Tse-hsu's arrival, but today he is here to welcome his successor.

An attendant raises the curtain of the sedan-chair, and Chi Shan emerges, bowing. Dressed in a yellow jacket and carrying the imperial decree in yellow silk, he swaggers to the platform. Hassocks are arranged here according to rank and Lin Tse-hsu heads the group, followed by Kuan Tien-pei, Yu Kun, Han Chao-ching and several dozen other officials.

Chi Shan stands solemnly to the left of the platform. Unrolling the imperial decree, he enunciates slowly and clearly, "His Majesty has issued a decree. Let Lin Tse-hsu take heed!"

Lin Tse-hsu, who was about to bow and inquire formally after the emperor's health, is very much astonished. He listens respectfully.

Chi Shan reads: ". . . In the coastal provinces this year many troops have been mobilized, wasting much money and manpower. This is due to Lin Tse-hsu's mismanagement. I, the emperor, order that his case be referred to the Ministry of Civil Office for a strict inquiry into his conduct."

The officials of provincial and prefectural rank hardly dare breathe for fear. Wu Shao-jung with a suppressed smile glances significantly at Han Chao-ching.

Yu Kun, his eyes half closed, watches Lin's face.

Kuan Tien-pei is consternated.

Lin forces himself to kneel erect till Chi Shan has finished reading. Then he collapses to the ground.

Yu Kun is the first to rise. He flicks the dust from his jacket with a sneer.

Lin remains stupefied on the ground till Kuan Tien-pei runs to his side and whispers, "Commissioner!" Then he rouses himself.

With immense sympathy, Kuan helps Lin up.

The inner hall of the high commissioner's residence. Chi Shan in civilian dress is sitting cross-legged on the couch. He takes snuff as he nonchalantly makes conversation with Lin Tse-hsu. "Well, how have you been since we last saw each other?"

Lin Tse-hsu, seated decorously in a lower position, replies with a bow, "Very well, thank you, Your Excellency."

Chi Shan remarks casually, "I recall the day two years ago when you submitted your proposal for the banning of opium to the emperor, and were given the seal of the high commissioner. All the court officials, civil and military, were filled with admiration. It seems like only yesterday."

Lin answers respectfully, "I have proved unworthy of His Majesty's great favour. My very life is not enough to pay back one fraction of my debt."

Kuan Tien-pei has been in great distress since the announcement at the wharf of Lin's dismissal. Unable to control himself any longer, he stands up to say, "I am growing old and foolish, Your Excellency, but there is something I beg you to elucidate."

Chi Shan, coldly: "Certainly, if I can."

Kuan Tien-pei says earnestly, "Commissioner Lin was successful in banning the opium. Why is he to be investigated by the Ministry of Civil Office?"

Chi Shan answers with a sneer, "You did not succeed in banning the opium. Instead you have brought calamity upon us, by forcing the foreigners to attack Tinghai and cause trouble at Tientsin. Why, the situation nearly got out of hand."

Kuan protests against this libel. "Tell me this, then, Your Excellency. Since Commissioner Lin was responsible for banning the opium and burning it at Humen, why didn't the foreigners attack Humen and settle accounts with him, instead of heading for Tientsin to make trouble for you?"

Unable to answer this, Chi Shan reprimands him angrily, "Those foreigners went north to Tientsin to petition His Majesty to have you punished!"

Struggling to overcome his indignation, Lin says, "The fault is mine. I shall not put the blame on others. . . ." Rising he asks Chi Shan with a bow, "But I beg Your Excellency to inform the emperor that I will gladly go to Chekiang to atone for my fault. If I fail to recover Tinghai, I shall die without a murmur." His voice is choked.

Tears well up in Kuan's eyes.

Chi Shan, quite unmoved, refuses outright. "We must carry out His Majesty's orders. I cannot pass on your request."

Kuan steps forward, no longer able to suppress his anger. "If Commissioner Lin is considered at fault for banning the opium, I

hold myself equally responsible. I ask to be relieved of my post and allowed to go home."

Outraged by this opposition, Chi Shan bangs the table and shouts, "How dare you!"

Yu Kun joins in too. "Such insolence! Trying to evade your guilt in this matter."

Lin has no wish to involve others and hastily stops Kuan. "You must not imperil your career for my sake." He makes a last plea, although knowing its hopelessness. "The lives of millions in Kwangtung and Kwangsi are in Your Excellency's hands. I hope you will act in the interests of the state. . . ." He bows low.

Chi Shan sneers. "I am very grateful for your advice." He raises his voice, "Here!"

Han Chao-ching answers arrogantly, "Yes, Your Excellency."

"Remove the button and feather from Lin Tse-hsu's hat!"

Lin is shocked.

Kuan is horrified. Tears come into his eyes.

Yu Kun gives the ghost of a smile.

Han insolently approaches Lin.

Lin glares at him, unwilling to be humiliated. Han falters and falls back before his compelling gaze. . . .

Slowly, with trembling hands, Lin takes off his red-tasselled hat. To him the red coral button and peacock feather are not simply insignia of office but symbols of his service to the state. Now wicked machinations have brought this to nothing. He is overwhelmed by despair, as if robbed of his dearest vision, his own soul. . . .

A tall incense-burner. Light smoke wreathes up from a burning stick of incense.

A volume of Chu Yuan's *Li Sao** falls to the brick-paved floor.

A bowl of gruel, two vegetable dishes. A pair of ebony chopsticks lie, unused, on the bowl.

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* Chu Yuan, a great patriotic poet of the 4th century B.C., was once a high official in the Kingdom of Chu. Distrusted by the king, he found himself not in a position to serve the people well, and so to express his sorrow he wrote the well-known long poem *Li Sao* (Lament).

Lin has moved from his official residence to temporary quarters in a private house.

He is resting motionless, his back to the screen, on a mahogany chair.

The curtains are drawn, all is still. Sunlight falling through the stained glass windows casts fantastic coloured shadows. Silence.

Lin Sheng tiptoes in from the courtyard and approaches the chair. He sees the untouched gruel on the table. "Master!" he says softly. "Your food is getting cold."

There is no answer.

Lin Sheng comes a step closer and says tentatively, "Master, many citizens outside are asking to see you."

Lin's eyes are closed. He turns his head slightly but remains silent.

With a soft sigh, Lin Sheng picks up the book and tiptoes out.

Lin Sheng goes to the front gate and quietly unbolts it. At once voices are raised outside and the gate is pushed ajar. Lin Sheng tries hard to close it.

Kuang Tung-shan squeezes inside and seeing Lin Sheng alone asks in a low voice, "What! Won't Commissioner Lin see us? . . ."

Lin Sheng shakes his head, not answering his question. "Ah, for two days he's eaten and drunk nothing. . . ."

Mai Kuan thrusts his head in and pleads, "You must ask him to see us. . . ."

Afraid lest the whole crowd rush in, Lin Sheng pushes the gate hard, replying, "All right, all right. I'll go and ask him again. . . ." He closes the gate and bolts it.

On his way inside he looks up and stops in surprise.

Lin Tse-hsu is walking slowly out. His pale face wears a calm, listless expression as he makes his way towards the gate.

Lin Sheng turns and draws back the bolt. At once the same clamour starts again outside. The two flaps of the gate creak open. The unexpected appearance of Lin Tse-hsu causes a hush.

Kuang Tung-shan, Mai Kuan and others cry with emotion, "Commissioner Lin! . . ."

Lin nods amiably as he walks slowly out, and way is made for him.

Outside, the streets and alleys are thronged with a crowd of several hundreds, men and women, old and young. Some hold high "presentation umbrellas" and "laudatory placards"; others have brought mirrors* and incense-burners, and a good number are holding incense sticks. At Lin Tse-hsu's approach, they surge forward with heartfelt affection and call softly, "Commissioner . . . don't go away!"

A small group advances with two "laudatory placards" decorated with coloured silk. On one is written in gold, "The people have benefited from his kindness," on the other "The foreign invaders fear his might."

An old man bears on a large platter a blue gown, the cap of a common citizen and a pair of cloth-soled shoes. With a dazed look in his eyes, he mutters, "Commissioner. . . ."

Grateful from the bottom of his heart, Lin repeats, "Thank you. Thank you!"

With moist eyes, Kuang Tung-shan looks at him beseechingly. "Commissioner Lin, you mustn't leave us." He drops to his knees.

One after another the others kneel down in the street.

His eyes full of tears, Lin helps Kuang to his feet, saying, "Please get up." He helps others of the citizens to rise.

They stand up then and gather eagerly round him.

He gazes at them with deep feeling. "Elders, brothers, I greatly appreciate your kindness. But we must obey His Majesty's orders. There is nothing I can do. . . ."

An old woman presses through the crowd to say vehemently, "Your Excellency, as long as you are here the foreign devils dare not enter Canton. But what shall we do in future?"

Lin Tse-hsu is speechless.

Kuang Tung-shan begs him, "Give us some advice, Your Excellency!"

Mai Kuan dries his eyes. "Just tell us what to do, Your Excellency!"

Breathlessly the people fix their eyes on him.

Touched by their eagerness, he answers firmly, "This old woman was right. We must not let the foreign devils enter Canton. You

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* Meaning that a person is so just and upright that he reflects truth like a mirror.

must stand together against the enemy. You must be united and bold!"

Close to tears, the old woman nods.

CHAPTER IX

1

The British flag-ship. Marines, fully armed, are lined up in two long rows on deck ready for action. On the bridge arrogant naval officers hold themselves proudly, exulting in their might. The British flag is flying from the mast.

In a high-backed red plush arm-chair by a long table in the fo'c's'le, Elliot sits in state. Wu Shao-jung and a messenger stand to attention before him with lowered heads.

Elliot is speaking like a conqueror, ". . . We will agree not to enter Canton on the following conditions: one, that all gun emplacements and defences built by Lin Tse-hsu are demolished."

Wu assents meekly, "Yes, Your Excellency."

"Two, that all the militias organized by Lin Tse-hsu are disbanded."

"Of course, of course." Wu Shao-jung bows and withdraws.

2

The gun emplacements.

At dusk, Chi Shan sends troops to take over the gun emplacements. Soldiers of the Green Battalion, holding torches, are guarding the passes in the hills. Sparks can be seen here and there.

An eight-thousand-catty gun is standing as proudly as ever, but now a fuse is hanging out of its barrel and a guard is holding a lighted torch to the fuse.

The fuse sputters, the guard runs hastily for cover. The soldiers on the hill rush this way and that as sparks fly in all directions.

The fuse burns into the barrel. With a crash the great gun explodes.

Scraps of iron scatter the hill-side amid clouds of smoke.

A series of explosions sound in the distance.

3

The river militiamen's camp.

Late at night. Troops of the Green Battalion with lanterns and torches, preceded by Han Chao-ching on horseback and runners holding a tiger-head placard bearing the word "Arrest!" rush to the river militiamen's camp.

Han Chao-ching raises a savage shout: "Arrest them!" The troops rush forward.

The militiamen's families are chased in all directions.

Stripped to the waist, Mai Kuan catches up a bench to ward off the swords of the government troops. Whirling his bench he knocks a soldier of the Green Battalion into a muddy pool beside the river.

Kuang Tung-shan picks up a basket and uses it as a shield against the lances and swords surrounding him. He kicks down several pursuers, retreating as he fights.

Besieged by several cordons of the Green Battalion, the militiamen find it hard to escape.

Kuang Tung-shan and Mai Kuan sprint to the river and leap into it.

Water splashes in the Pearl River in the moonlight. . . .

4

By the light of a candle which has burned low, Lin Tse-hsu and Lin Sheng are playing chess.

The far-off explosions of the guns set their nerves on edge. Master and servant find it hard to concentrate.

The door creaks open. Lin Tse-hsu jumps up in alarm.

Kuan Tien-pei staggers in, dishevelled, and cries brokenly, "Commissioner! . . ."

Lin Tse-hsu runs forward to meet him. They clasp each other and weep.

5

Lin Tse-hsu's former headquarters now has a new master. Chi Shan has installed many strange Western novelties here — clocks of every kind and description.

Fascinated by this collection of foreign clocks, Chi Shan is raptly examining one in the shape of a pagoda.

Yu Kun hurries in in high spirits to impart some important news, but Chi Shan signs to him to keep quiet.

Suddenly the dozen and more clocks in the room start chiming together. It is twelve o'clock.

The hands of a fan-shaped gilt clock point to twelve. Underneath, a mechanized foreign figure is playing music. . . .

Another gilt clock in the shape of a tower shows twelve. On the small stage beneath a foreign figure is dancing. . . .

A clock in the form of a bird-cage also shows twelve. A thrush in the cage flaps its wings and sings tunefully. . . .

These intricate mechanisms are most diverting. Chi Shan strikes the table and cries, "Wonderful, wonderful!"

When the clocks have finished striking, Yu Kun reports, "Commissioner, the gun emplacements have been demolished, and the river militiamen dispersed."

Chi Shan does not even turn his head, still engrossed in his toys. Busily winding a clock, he replies perfunctorily, "Tomorrow we'll publish a proclamation to set the citizens' minds at rest."

The proclamation is posted on a screen in front of Chi Shan's headquarters. People hasten to spread this news. Old and young flock to read the proclamation.

And this is what it says:

". . . So great is the fame of our Celestial Empire that all barbarians cower at the sound of our name. Therefore let everyone carry on normally, instead of feeling needless alarm. . . ."

Some people believe this and maintain that peace will reign from now on. In high delight they congratulate each other.

6

Elliot's sinister face looms large. He shouts, "Fire!"

A big gun, occupying the whole screen, belches fire.

On board a warship, Elliot directs the attack. Several dozen guns on the three-decker keep up an incessant fire.

Several dozen British ships scud forward before the wind. They fan out to besiege the coastal batteries, subjecting them to a fierce bombardment.

The Chinese guns fire back sporadically.

The massed guns on the British ships keep up a deadly rain of fire.

The fortress is a shambles. The debris of the eight-thousand-catty guns litter the ground. Two or three hastily mounted old guns are putting up a feeble resistance.

Several dozen landing vessels filled with British marines come ashore like water beetles. Under cover of their ships' fire, some British troops jump into the shallow water and force a landing. The leader, carrying a Union Jack, charges up the hill.

Kuan Tien-pei in front of his headquarters on the hill is watching through his telescope. The situation is desperate. He has only a handful of defenders, far outnumbered by the enemy. Nothing but the speedy arrival of reinforcements from Canton can save them.

A British shell explodes on the gate of his headquarters. It goes up in a sheet of flame. Sun Chang-ching gallops up and jumps down from his saddle.

Sun Chang-ching dashes up to the headquarters and pants, "Admiral! The high commissioner refuses to send us reinforcements."

Kuan is not surprised. Their position is now quite hopeless. He casts about for some desperate measure to save the situation.

An officer runs over to report, "Admiral, the devils are closing in from three sides." Kuan runs to the edge of the cliff and sees British troops in red coats and tall helmets swarming over the hill. The Chinese defence line along the coastal wall has been broken. The British climb up the wall and close in on the fortress.

Seeing that they are besieged on all sides Kuan realizes that all is lost; he reaches a decision and runs into his tent. He reappears, his admiral's seal in both hands, and holds it out to Sun Chang-ching. "I entrust this to you!"

"But why?" Sun looks puzzled.

Kuan speaks with dignity, "An official seal of our Celestial Empire must not fall into the hands of the foreign devils!"

Divining his intention, Sun exclaims, "Admiral. . . ."

Kuan resolutely makes known his determination to his trusted lieutenant. "You will go back and report to Commissioner Lin. Ask him to inform the emperor that Kuan Tien-pei has given his life for his country."

Sun is too stupefied to take the seal.

Kuan orders him, "Go at once!"

A shell from the sea smashes the tent, mud spatters, clouds of sulphurous smoke arise. Some guards and officers near by are wounded and killed.

Sun Chang-ching cannot bear to desert Kuan at this juncture. He falls on his knees. "I won't leave you so long as I live!"

Kuan stamps and starts to unsheathe his sword. "Go!" he orders.

Sun's face is stained with tears. He refuses to move.

Kuan has to implore him, "Go, go! . . ."

Forced to take the seal, Sun bows to the admiral in farewell. Swallowing his tears, he leaves in bitterness of spirit. . . .

An officer announces in alarm, "Admiral, the enemy has entered the left fort!"

Kuan hastens to the place.

Outside the fortress, British troops are crawling like ants all over the hill. They are converging in large groups on the fortress.

The left fort is in ruins after the enemy bombardment. Chinese corpses strew the ground.

Kuan runs in from a trench to find only two soldiers left to man the last gun. Though scorched and burnt, they are holding out stubbornly.

Kuan runs to the gun emplacement and looks down the slope.

Kuan and the two gunners, one of them a youngster, strain to train the gun on the enemy.

The shell explodes, killing most of the invaders below.

Before Kuan has time to catch his breath, a shell bursts beside him. Black smoke billows up, the two gunners fall in a pool of blood. He bends down to help them, but they are mortally wounded.

Kuan stands up amid the fumes and looks out to sea.

The positions on the beach are burning. The British ships have closed in to concentrate their fire.

He surveys the foot of the hill.

British troops are surging forward like a tide, meeting with no resistance.

He turns back to look at the entrance to the fort close by.

British troops have rushed into the trench and are swarming up the steps.

After looking around him, Kuan resolutely unsheathes his sword.

His eyes gleam as they rest on the glittering steel. The breeze from the ocean ruffles his grizzled beard. He sweeps the sword upwards.

The blade slashes his neck. His shadow stands firm, unmoved. . . . A group of British charge into the fortress.

The British are awed by the stern courage with which the admiral meets death.

His great, burning eyes glare at the enemy, as if even in death his avenging spirit will not let them pass.

The British falter and withdraw in fear.

Kuan's hand drops, and the sword clatters to the ground on the broken fragments of the eight-thousand-catty gun.

A British officer looks round and sees the young gunner struggling to his feet.

Gritting his teeth, the young gunner rises from a pool of blood. He glares with inexpressible hate at the enemy and step by step retreats.

Pistol in hand, the British officer advances towards him slowly.

The young gunner reaches the edge of the cliff, turns and throws himself over.

He has jumped from the high precipice into the ocean which glitters in the sunset. British redcoats rush to the edge to look down.

Kuan Tien-pei lies dead on his back. All around him flames and smoke wreathe up to the sky.

Smoke shot with flames drifts across the sky. Then the blue sea, the evening clouds and the setting sun become visible again.

7

Late at night. Sun Chang-ching belabours the knocker, a ring with an animal design, on Lin Tse-hsu's gate.

Lin Sheng wakes and hurries to open the gate. Sweating profusely, Sun Chang-ching pushes his way in.

Lin Tse-hsu has dressed in haste and comes out holding a red candle. He asks, startled, "What has happened?"

Sun Chang-ching falls on his knees. With tears he says, "Admiral Kuan has given his life at Humen."

Stunned as if by a thunderbolt, Lin Tse-hsu stamps his foot and groans aloud.

Sun Chang-ching complains indignantly, "His Excellency Chi Shan refused to send reinforcements, though he knew our danger."

Lin staggers to the table to support himself. He sheds tears of grief and rage. Suddenly he pounds the table and roars, "I'll go and see him!" He puts on his clothes and strides out.

Night. The high commissioner's gate is heavily guarded.

The road is deserted but for Lin Tse-hsu who rushes towards the gate.

Guards step forward to stop him, but he pays no attention. Hesitantly, they make way.

The hall.

Lin passes through the gate and hurries straight to the hall.

Chi Shan's servants are carrying cases and chests, as well as bundles large and small, making ready for a hasty departure.

Lin strides into the hall. Han Chao-ching intercepts him with a shout. "The high commissioner is engaged!"

Without so much as a glance at him, Lin brushes him aside and sweeps into the inner hall.

In the inner hall Chi Shan is supervising the packing of his household goods.

Lin strides in and announces solemnly and loudly, "Lin Tse-hsu asks permission to speak to Your Excellency."

Annoyed by this unexpected visit, Chi Shan asks, "What business can you have at such a late hour?"

Wild with grief, Lin Tse-hsu demands vehemently, "Does Your Excellency know that Admiral Kuan has given his life at Humen?"

"Yes, I know," replies Chi Shan coldly. "As the naval commander he failed in his duty to repulse the enemy. I feel no pity for him."

Lin demands indignantly, "But why did you stand aside and refuse to help? Why didn't you send more troops?"

Chi Shan is exasperated and answers sternly: "My troops are needed to defend Canton."

Lin exposes this lie. "But once Humen falls, there is nothing to stop the invaders."

Chi Shan pretends to have the situation well in hand. "I know how to make them withdraw."

The situation is so critical that Lin Tse-hsu decides to set aside personal resentment and earnestly appeal once more to the other's

better nature. He says, "As the old saying has it, Your Excellency, 'Troops are provisioned for a thousand days in order that they may fight for a single day.' I have received great kindness from the state. To deserve that kindness and not disgrace the people, I once more beg you to allow me to atone for my guilt. Give me three thousand horses and men, and I shall defend the Pearl River Harbour to the bitter end. If I cannot beat the foreigners back, I shall gladly forfeit my life."

Chi Shan smiles savagely. "Hah! So you still haven't given up hope." With an angry look he shakes his sleeves and turns away.

Before Lin Tse-hsu can follow him, an attendant outside shouts, "Let Lin Tse-hsu hear the imperial decree!"

Chi Shan, hearing this, turns back.

In great surprise, Lin hastily straightens his clothes and goes out to listen to the order.

The imperial decree with a round dragon design embroidered in gold appears in the middle of the screen. It is gradually lowered to reveal Chi Shan's sneering face. He reads slowly, ". . . Let Lin Tse-hsu be banished immediately to Ili, where he will live in exile and endeavour to atone for his crimes. He must go directly from Canton. By order of the emperor." Having read this, he fixes his cruel gaze on Lin Tse-hsu who has knelt to hear the decree.

Lin raises wrathful eyes to look at Chi Shan, but suppresses his indignation and replies in the correct manner: "His Majesty's subject Lin Tse-hsu thanks the emperor for his kindness and will obey the order."

With dignity he stands up. Deprived of all else, he regains his inherent human dignity. With a look of contempt at Chi Shan, he turns to leave proudly, like a man liberated. . . .

CHAPTER X

1

The British troops capture Canton.

Night. Elliot on horseback is leading a company of British troops to Sanyuanli north of Canton. There has been a fierce

battle here during the day and houses destroyed by gun-fire are still burning. On the flagstones by the road lies the corpse of an old woman, still firmly grasping a chopper stained with blood. She is the one who told Lin Tse-hsu, "We must not let the devils enter Canton! . . ."

Title: May 30, 1841.

2

The inscription "The Old Sanyuan Temple" is carved on grey stone.

The interior of the temple is wreathed with incense smoke and crowded with villagers. Some carry tridents, iron bars or other primitive weapons, others farm tools like hoes and picks.

Beside the altar stands Kuang Tung-shan surrounded by seven or eight stalwarts, including Mai Kuan. They appear to be waiting for something.

Liang San rushes in. Men crowd round him to ask, "What is happening?"

He answers, panting, "The devils are entering the village."

In a buzz of talk, the villagers bestir themselves.

Kuang Tung-shan calls out, "Is everything ready?"

Mai Kuan looks round and answers, "Yes."

A middle-aged villager reports, "Men from one hundred and three townships have come."

"Good!" Kuang turns to kneel reverently before the image of the Northern Emperor. There is dead silence. He prays softly, "Show your might, Great Emperor! After we have killed the foreign devils, we will cover your image with gold."

Mai Kuan lights a torch at the red candle before the god's image. Flames flare up.

Mai Kuan's wife, Liang San and many others light their torches from that of Mai Kuan.

Flames flicker on the resolute face of Mai Kuan's wife.

Flames flicker on the determined face of Mai Kuan. Blazing torches are passed from hand to hand.

Kuang Tung-shan takes respectfully from the altar the "Three-star Flag of Command," a triangular flag with a black base and white border. He raises this high before the crowd.

A hush falls as they see the Northern Emperor's flag.

Kuang calls out, "When the flag goes forward, that will be the signal for attack."

The villagers raise their torches and respond, "When the flag goes forward, that will be the signal for attack."

Kuang continues, "When the flag moves back, that will be the signal to withdraw."

They respond, "When the flag moves back, that will be the signal to withdraw."

"We are ready to give our lives!"

"We are ready to give our lives!" The villagers brandish their weapons, farm tools and torches as they repeat these words.

As if at a review, Kuang looks round his comrades-in-arms, then calls, "We will start now." They make way to let him walk at their head.

Lightning, torches, swords, spears, hoes and angry faces flash across the screen. In the distance, thunder rumbles.

3

A placid pool is gradually ruffled by torrential rain.

Elliot is leading his straggling troops through the downpour. They are groping their way cautiously towards the hills.

From behind a clump of green bamboos, Kuang Tung-shan is watching the enemy's movements.

Behind a wattle fence, Mai Kuan's wife and some others are waiting with bated breath to ambush the enemy.

Two British scouts timidly part the reeds to reconnoitre.

They see a militiaman standing sentry on a mound. He has a matting cape, a straw hat and a red-tasselled spear, and is keeping watch in the rain.

The two British redcoats steal forward.

Mai Kuan and some peasants hidden in the thick foliage of banyan trees see them clearly from above.

The British scouts steal up behind the militiaman. One of them lunges out savagely with his bayonet. The sentry falls without a struggle.

His straw hat rolls off — it is a figure of straw on the ground.

The British scouts take fright.

A copper gong is beaten rapidly.

Kuang Tung-shan is beating the gong among the bamboos as a signal.

Mai Kuan raises a big stone with both hands and smashes it down from the tree.

It hits the head of the scout who bayoneted the straw figure. He falls down streaming with blood.

Elliot hears gongs now from the left, now from the right, close at hand as well as far away. In the inky darkness nothing can be seen clearly. It is a time when "The soughing of the wind, the crying of wild cranes, even the rustling of the grass and trees, seem like a pursuing army." He grows apprehensive and flustered. His men lose heart.

Someone beats a gong from the roof of a thatched hut. The villagers in ambush rush out with their weapons.

The villagers on the trees rain down a shower of stones. Their aim is accurate and deadly.

The British troops cannot withstand this attack from all sides. Some are wounded, some slip and fall. They are thrown into confusion. Firing wildly to give themselves courage, they begin to withdraw.

The British troops run helter-skelter. Many stagger and roll on the ground or fall into pools.

As the troops retreat in disorder past the fence, Mai Kuan's wife and those with her thrust out long hooks to trip them up.

Mai Kuan's wife trips up a redcoat and will not let him get up. Strong arms raise hoes and poles and smash down hard.

The British troops fire wildly to cover their retreat, afraid the Chinese may charge them in the darkness.

A British soldier tries to fire at a tree but his gun fails to go off. Frantic, he breaks it open and examines the powder.

The pouring rain has soaked the barrel and wet the charge.

He swears, "Damn! The powder's wet!" In panic, he grabs his gun and runs.

Many guns miss fire. The morale of the British is shaken. It becomes a rout.

Mai Kuan is the first to jump down from his tree. He swings his hoe and fells a British soldier.

The giant banyan trees with their twisted branches are like an army camp. Now the fighters crouching there drop down like winged warriors from heaven and hotly pursue the British troops.

Leading his routed troops, Elliot tries to break through on the right.

Mai Kuan's wife charges with her force of several hundred from the right. With gleaming swords and spears, like men of iron, they give no quarter but bar the enemy's retreat through the wild wind and rain.

Elliot hastily turns back to break through from the left.

Mai Kuan charges with another force from the left. They deploy in battle formation like a wall of bronze.

Elliot does not know which way to turn. He signs frantically to his men to fall back to their original position.

Mai Kuan's wife charges with a red-tasselled spear.

Elliot falls back.

They are cornered, caught in the net spread by more than a thousand peasants.

Elliot and his troops retreat step by step into a gully.

The huge net, thrown over hills, forests and villages, is drawn more tightly now. The villagers press in on them thick and fast.

The British troops are forced to take to the hills.

Dawn. Morning sunlight filters through dark clouds after the rain.

The British troops, besieged all night on the hill, trudge wearily forward.

Elliot and another officer approach the cliff. Suddenly sighting peasant forces at the foot of the hill, they hastily conceal themselves in the long grass and peer down.

From the villages, forests, fields, hills and roads within a radius of a dozen *li*, armed peasants, men and women, old and young, are advancing with coloured flags. These bear the names of a hundred and three different townships: Hsiaokang, Sanyuanli, Tanghsia, Niulankang. . . . They quietly converge on the hilltop, tightening their cordon.

Kuang Tung-shan at the head of one contingent charges from the lichee grove. Waving the "Three-star Flag of Command," he climbs a height and shouts, "Villagers! Death to the devils!"

A great answering shout from all sides, "Death to the devils!"

Mai Kuan charges from the left with his force. As if performing a dragon-lantern dance, they flourish their snow-white banner with the bold characters "*Ping Ying Tuan.*"* The blood-red inscription on white stands out against the blue sky and fleecy clouds.

Elliot, hiding in the grass, is aghast. Like a bird flushed by a hunter, he retreats towards the summit with his men.

Mai Kuan's wife leads her force up the mountain from the right.

Kuang Tung-shan and his men make a frontal attack.

Elliot and his troops, like homeless dogs, run desperately towards the summit.

The hill is one dark mass of people, the peak only rising like a solitary island above the sea of men. On the summit the panic-

* "Put down the British" corps.

stricken handful of British redcoats in tall helmets seem like ants about to be engulfed by the sea.

Far away on the mountain road, beyond the Pavilion of Parting, Lin Tse-hsu reins in his horse to watch this awe-inspiring battle.

Behind him are his two escorts and two men with baggage rolls.

With tears of emotion in his eyes, Lin Tse-hsu turns his horse and sets off for distant regions. . . .

Mai Kuan raises high the banner of the *"Ping Ying Tuan"* and rushes to the top of the hill.

The forces led by Kuang Tung-shan and Mai Kuan's wife race to meet under this great banner.

Narration: "The opium brought to China by the foreign invaders not only failed to benumb the minds of the Chinese people, but, on the contrary, aroused them. This was the start of the struggle of the Chinese people against imperialism and feudalism."

A group of British soldiers with a British flag are fleeing in panic on the mountain top, rushing wildly towards the back of the hill.

The British flag falters and gradually disappears from sight behind the hill. . . .

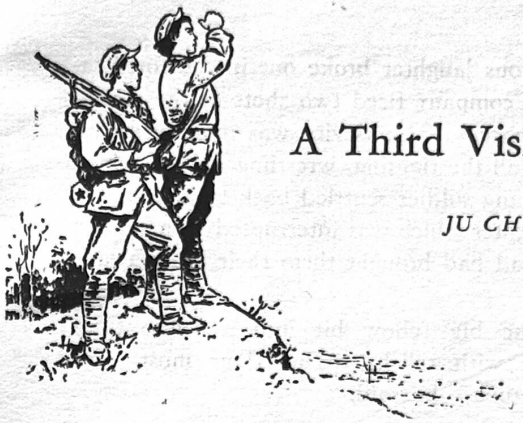
The heroic forces of the people are converging on the towering mountain top.

The great banner of the *"Ping Ying Tuan"* is unfurled to flutter under the boundless sky. . . .

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang

Shaoshan Landscape →
(painting in the traditional style) by Tuan Chien-hu

The artist, born in Nanhsien County, Hunan Province, has taught in the Hunan Art School for Teachers as well as in various middle schools. He is at present an art editor of the Hunan People's Publishing House.



A Third Visit to Yenchuang

JU CHIH-CHUAN

There was no wind that night, but snow kept falling. It drifted down leisurely to drop noiselessly on the road, on the winter wheat, in the trenches. Lamplights flashed in villages near and far; here and there occasional sparks floated from cottage chimneys. The people and the army along the Huaihai front were happily spending the last few hours of 1948.

I had just been to the front lines to congratulate the fighters on their brave deeds and to wish them a happy New Year. I walked back alone on the snow-covered ground, what I had seen was still vivid in my mind: Light grey planes of Chiang Kai-shek hastily parachuting boxes to their besieged troops, then hastily flying away. Enemy soldiers in our encirclement ran riot even as the boxes were still drifting down, rushing like starving mad dogs from their dugouts to snatch and fight over them. In fortifications decorated with pine branches and red flowers, our fighters sat watching and commenting on their behaviour. One fighter, a husky big fellow, said humorously: "Why do they fight over them? They ought to put all the boxes together and then divide them up!"

"You ought to be their commander-in-chief," remarked another fighter.

"I'm not boasting," the former said seriously. "If they made me their commander-in-chief, I'd see to it that they didn't go hungry. I'd say, 'Surrender your arms and you can cross over and eat big wheat cakes.'"

"Haha. . . ." Thunderous laughter broke out in the fortifications. Then another PLA company fired two shots at the scrambling enemy — to "make peace." This device was most effective. At the sound of the shots, all the fighting, wrestling and snatching ceased and every Kuomintang soldier scuttled back to his dugout. Our fighters burst into laughter which was interrupted by a sudden whistle. The cooking squad had brought them their New Year's Eve dinner, piping hot.

Narrowing his eyes, the big fellow bit into a white flour dumpling, and chewed it with relish. "This flour must have been sent from our Chiaotung," he said.

"It's from Tsinan!"

"It's from Taihsing!"

"It's from. . . ."

Ah! Snow-white flour. Biting into the snow-white dumplings, I recalled a small village a thousand *li* away and a simple village woman. She had said that she would have white flour milled and ready for me. This wheat flour might have come from Yenchuang, I thought. It might have been sent by Shoulitzu and Lai-chuan! I decided excitedly, "It was she. It was he."

It seemed to be snowing harder. The ground was a stretch of white. Someone had left a trail of deep footprints on the road, footprints made with large strides leading to the front line. I turned up the ear flaps of my army cap to let the snow-flakes caress my burning cheeks. I wanted to cool the excitement in my heart. But it was no use. My mind was in a tumult. Many connected and unconnected things, many clearly remembered and some half forgotten, all surged up together. . . .

Last year, 1947, when the *kaoliang* was turning red, I went to Yenchuang for the first time with Comrade Ma of the mass work department of the military area. Yenchuang had ben liberated for some time, but its local armed forces were weak. Reactionary gangs, hand in glove with the landlords, often made trouble. They even came into the village at midnight with a chaff-chopper to look for our village cadres. So land reform work in this area was rather special. On the one hand, the peasants longed for land; on the other, they were hesitant and dared not ask for it.

Our task was to help the government to try out land reform here on a small scale: We were to mobilize the masses, carry out land reform and organize the peasants' own "home guards" at the same time.

Yenchuang was a fine place. In front and behind the village, level land stretched far into the distance, broken only by the faint lines of mountains on the horizon. When a district cadre took us to the village it was broad daylight, but the place was utterly silent, so silent that it made me uneasy. We went first to the home of Yen Lai-chuan, chairman of the peasants' association. He was a blunt fellow in his thirties. He and his father were repairing their courtyard wall when we entered. The sight of two people in army uniform stunned him. A little tense, he quickly took us into the room and closed his door with a bang. Then he greeted us, "How are you, comrades?"

The extraordinary silence of the village and the way Lai-chuan shut his door caused me to make a quick decision. I must get an art troupe to come and give a performance here the next day, to drive away this unpleasant silence with gongs and drums, songs and dances and let the people talk to us with their doors wide open.

As soon as Lai-chuan closed the door the room became so dark that we couldn't make out each other's faces. I heard Old Ma asking Lai-chuan straight-to-the-point questions: What was the situation of the dependable masses of the village, how many activists were there, and so on. After some time, I discovered that there was another source of light in the room. It came through the doorway behind me which led into another room. Light shone in through a paper window-pane there overlooking a large brick bed. A woman of twenty or so sat primly at one end of the brick bed beside the window. Obviously Lai-chuan's wife. Sitting in the light she was sewing with downcast eyes. She seemed not to notice at all that two strangers had come to her house. At the time I took her to be one of those quiet, docile women who paid no attention to anything which did not concern her.

Old Ma was telling Lai-chuan how to get in touch with the masses and develop activists, how to hold solidarity meetings and carry out land reform. Lai-chuan listened attentively. But sud-

denly I saw him frowning at something behind me. I turned and saw that the placid, quiet woman had left the brick bed and was leaning against the door frame listening to what was being said. Even though Lai-chuan knitted his brows and glared at her she pretended not to notice. She stayed where she was and listened to Old Ma. When I turned to look she smiled at me in a friendly manner, then walked away softly. When Old Ma finished about how the poor peasants and hired hands should unite to struggle against the landlords and share out the land, Lai-chuan rose immediately and rolled up his sleeves. Pulling open the door with one hand, he said, "Right. Come what may, we'll drive it through!"

Light streamed into the room as soon as the door was opened. But outside, the village was still quiet. Neither dogs barked nor roosters crowed. Not a sound could be heard. Lai-chuan's father was still absorbed in repairing the wall. All this seemed to exert a sort of pressure on Lai-chuan. Veins showing on his forehead, he hesitated for a moment. "What if the masses don't follow us?" he asked.

"If we really arouse them, they will," Old Ma said with conviction.

I turned and found Lai-chuan's wife again quietly leaning against the door, a faint smile on her face.

That night, I stayed in Lai-chuan's house and shared a bed with his wife while Lai-chuan slept with his father in the outer room.

I did not like staying in this house particularly. The members of this family were all tongue-tied, as if they were bewitched. Lai-chuan's father, a small pipe clamped between his teeth all day long, worked and ate with his head down. He never said anything. As for Lai-chuan's wife, I never heard a sound from her either. Perhaps she was taciturn by nature, or had feudal notions of propriety. Lai-chuan himself was a bit shy with me because I was a woman. If he had something to discuss he would go to Old Ma. So I had only his six-year-old son, Little Chuan, to talk to. The child was eager to talk and he liked me. We became friends by the time I had been there half a day. Little Chuan leaned against my legs and pointed at the land outside. "My ma says the crops in the fields will be ours from now on."

"Right, they will be your own," I answered positively, taking his thin little wrist in my hand.

"Then we will be able to eat white flour dumplings at New Year."

"The wheat hasn't been sown yet. Wait till next year. You'll have white dumplings next New Year."

The child was happy. His mother who was cooking maize gruel turned to glance at me with a smile. But she still said nothing.

I made several calls the following afternoon. When I came back at night, Lai-chuan and his father were snoring in the outer room. Little Chuan, sleeping beside his mother on the bed in the inner room, was breathing evenly. Lai-chuan's wife did not stir. She seemed only half asleep. Not wanting to disturb them I kept my puttees on, simply lying down and pulling a quilt over me.

"You aren't asleep, are you, comrade?" Lai-chuan's wife asked softly, edging nearer to me. "Tell me, if we share out the landlord's land, what about the deeds?"

This was probably a question she had considered for a long time. I quickly told her that the old land deeds, having been issued by the reactionary government, didn't count. I said they could burn them in the fire. The people's government would issue new ones.

"Good!" A great load seemed to be lifted from her mind. She let out a long breath and was silent again. She was so still that she might have been asleep. But I could sense that she was still awake, probably deep in thought, her eyes wide open. Sure enough after some time she asked again:

"Aren't you homesick, comrade?"

"If everyone stays at home who's going to fight against the reactionaries? And how can the poor people start a new life?"

"Right." Another of her doubts was resolved. She was silent again after that remark. I could see that this woman was no fool. My interest in her grew. So I inquired, "Sister-in-law, what's your name?"

For an answer she laughed softly in her quilt. "I've never been to school," she said after a while, "so I have no formal name."

"What did they call you at home?"

"An awful name. I was the last child born, so my mother called me Shoulitzu which means that's all."

I told Old Ma about Shoulitzu the next day. He wanted me to tell her more about women's liberation. But that day I was busy. Hurrying around until nearly noon I got the art troupe over, and arranged for a performance on a village threshing ground. At the sound of our gongs, drums, fiddles and singing, the children came flocking. Men and women hurried from their homes. People began to laugh and applaud. The silence like a stagnant pool which had prevailed in the village was completely shattered. The black lacquer gate of the despotic landlord, One-eyed Wolf, opened a slit, then immediately closed again tight. Between the acts, we did propaganda on the current situation. Some of the audience drew nearer, but others, after first edging nearer, walked away. Only the children stayed close and stood up front all through the performance. Lai-chuan, walking through the crowd, brought us two buckets of tea. This reminded me of Shoulitzu. Failing to find her in the crowd, I ran back during an interval. She was sitting primly on the brick bed with legs folded under her just like the day before, her head bent over a pair of shoes she was making while she listened to the attractive singing and the applause.

"Why don't you go to watch the fun, Shoulitzu?" I asked.

She raised her head and smiled for an answer. Sitting down on the edge of the bed I pressed her for an explanation. "Is it proper?"she asked with a smile.

"Why not? . . ." I was on the point of giving her a long lecture when she interrupted me with a smile, "Do you think it's honourable to sing?"

"Sure." I was quite positive.

"Then you sing a song for me."

I hadn't suspected she could be so mischievous. Smiling she took my arm and asked:

"Last night you said we can burn all the landlord's deeds. What if he puts them away?"

"Puts them away? We'll find them wherever he hides them!"

"He's put two big bundles wrapped in cloth in the hay-stack behind the temple. Can you find them?" She continued to smile at me.

I suddenly felt that this Shoulitzu, quiet and somewhat feudal-minded, showed a real interest in land reform. She was concerned about the land deeds and the landlord's movable property. Even more important was that she seemed not the least bit afraid of the reactionary powers. Here was a real gem for land reform work. I was excited. Catching hold of her arm I asked:

"Do you dare to share out the landlords' land?"

Quiet as ever, she laughed. "I have no say about that."

Singing voices and the sound of laughter drifted into the room. A little angry but very much drawn to Shoulitzu who sat so primly on the brick bed, I said: "Men and women are on the same footing now, sister-in-law." I wanted to say more about the liberation of women but the applause outside told me that the next act was about to start. Being in charge of costumes, I had to hurry out.

I was supposed to be on sentry duty until midnight that night. But Old Ma, wrapped in a lined quilt, came to relieve me when I had burned only one time-measuring incense stick. Back at the cottage, I found Lai-chuan and his father asleep and snoring. Shoulitzu had not yet gone to bed. She was twining thread beside a lamp. Happily she beckoned and made me sit beside her. Feeling my clothes, she asked whether I was cold or tired. Then she dug out a cob of corn, baked in the wrapper, from the stove. She placed it in front of me and watched me eat. Very hungry, I thought it delicious. She laughed and said:

"If we really share out the land here, we'll feed you much better than this."

"Sister-in-law!" I could not quite decide how to address her. Sometimes I felt that she was an ordinary village woman whom I could only call sister-in-law, in the old-fashioned country manner. Yet I often found her as close as a comrade, so I called her directly by name. Now she was being motherly to me. A little moved I said, "Of course the land will really be shared out. Chairman Mao says so."

"Has Chairman Mao said it? Then it's as good as true." She became excited too but her voice dropped to a lower tone.

"As good as true."

"What if the people here don't act of one mind?"

"They will. We'll gradually educate them. Tomorrow we'll hold a meeting to unite the poor."

She stared intently at the lamp and slowly said, "That's fine." She started preparing for bed. I felt that she wanted land badly and would make a good activist. The only thing was she stubbornly believed that women were inferior to men. This was not good. So I questioned her further.

"When the land is divided, if a man is given three *mou* do you know how much a woman will get?"

"Didn't you say men and women are equal? If a man gets three, so will a woman!"

"Since you know this, you ought to come out and speak, take a hand in things."

"You want me to speak? What can I say? People would die laughing." Hiding her head in the quilt she could not help laughing herself.

I was very tired that day so I blew out the lamp and lay down to sleep. After a while she again whispered in my ear:

"Listen, it doesn't matter if the landlord hides his deeds. Since our government is in control here, the deeds don't mean anything in his hands. If the reactionaries come we won't be able to lead a good life anyway, and he'll still be rich whether he has the deeds or not. Isn't that right?"

"Yes, quite right." I couldn't help praising her. She had indeed thought things out thoroughly. The trouble was she kept it all to herself, not daring to open her mouth and speak out. Ah, Shoulitzu. . . .

I was suddenly awakened from my dreams by an exclamation. "What do you know!" It was Lai-chuan's hoarse voice. I sat up and looked into the other room. Shoulitzu was pounding garlic on the stove while close by Lai-chuan was shouting and brandishing a fire poker. It was already day.

"Can't you lower your voice?" said she without so much as raising her eyelids.

"A mere woman and you have learned to be so meddlesome. Dividing the land, and sharing out the land. Is that the kind of thing for you women to talk about?" Lai-chuan now spoke in a lower tone but he was still making her feel his weight.

"Why not? I'll end up like my mother at the very worst." Shoulitzu spoke out!

I lay down softly again for fear of interrupting their argument. But Lai-chuan had seen me. He swallowed what he wanted to say and stalked out with two water buckets.

That day I told Old Ma the episode. He was silent for quite a while before he said with a sigh, "That's why we say land reform is digging up the old roots of feudal power. When the roots are shaken, other things will have to stir."

The solidarity meeting of the poor peasants and hired hands was held the next day in Lai-chuan's house. More than twenty paupers, faces pale and backs bent from the oppression and exploitation of landlords and reactionaries, crept one by one into Lai-chuan's house after dark. Shoulitzu came out to add oil and to put two more wicks in the lamp. Then she disappeared into the inner room, and let down the door curtain.

When the meeting started Lai-chuan talked briefly about uniting to fight against the landlords. There was a pause after he finished. Nobody would open his mouth. He waited for some time, then got angry by the sight of everyone merely smoking and coughing. Getting red in the neck he suddenly pounded the table.

"Those who want land, stay!" he shouted in a hoarse voice. "Come what may, we'll see it through. Those who don't, can get out!" This outburst not only startled the people who came to the meeting, even I and Old Ma were stunned. One timid individual got to his feet tremblingly: "Lai-chuan. . . . You know me, I. . . ." He wanted to leave. A few more stood up. The meeting, which had taken four days to prepare, was on the point of being broken up by Lai-chuan's shouting. Quickly Old Ma rose. But before he could say anything, the door curtain was lifted. With downcast eyes, Shoulitzu stood in the doorway.

"Villagers," she said, timid and shy, "I'd say we want land!"

This softly uttered sentence was even more of a surprise to

everyone than Lai-chuan's outburst. Those who had stood up and were about to leave, paused. Though her lips trembled slightly, Shoulitzu spoke steadily and clearly:

"Our fathers and generations before them never asked to share out the landlord's land, but they never had a decent life either. You all know how the landlord killed my mother and threw her body to the dogs. So I say, let's divide the land and fight for a way to live." She raised her eyes only after she had finished, quickly swept the room with a glance, then vanished again. There was utter silence, no one made a move. Lai-chuan, mouth agape, seemed also to have been calmed by his wife's speech. He stood up abruptly after a while, tightened his belt and cried hoarsely. "Villagers, there's no way out for us unless we divide up the land. We'll pledge with blood to unite tightly together and divide the damned land."

At these passionate words of his, the atmosphere in the little room became animated. Two young men stood up and spoke enthusiastically. A grey-bearded old man walked forward with a squawking rooster in one hand and a chopper in another, to make a pledge in blood.

After the meeting we organized a home guard and posted sentries to watch One-eyed Wolf, the despotic landlord. Yenchuang had awakened. The people no longer hugged the walls as they walked. The village resounded with laughter and singing. With both hands they lifted the big mountain which had been weighing them down for thousands of years, and smashed it to smithereens.

As we were measuring out the land and driving in the landmarks for the new owners, Lai-chuan, holding his son, Little

Chuan, joyfully turned somersaults on the land he had been allotted. Shoulitzu could not help smiling though there were tears in her eyes. How I hated to leave these people who had finally begun a new life. But we had to go.

Muffled artillery boomed in the south on the day of our departure. Shoulitzu helped me spread my bed cover, fold my quilt and roll up my bedding. Silently, she helped to put the pack on my back. Little Chuan hung around me refusing to let me out of his sight. I told Shoulitzu that she must be braver in the future, she should speak up and do some community work too, not hide herself at home any more. She promised compliantly, eager to assure me. Putting a stack of *kaoliang* pancakes she had prepared into my hands she said: "When the wheat is in next year, I'll mill the flour and have it waiting for you."

"We're sure to come, Shoulitzu. Perhaps before the wheat is in, perhaps after. Maybe we'll see you every day. We're sure to win."

The people now had land but they still needed guns. With the permission of our superiors, Old Ma left his rifle with the villagers of Yenchuang. Then we said goodbye to Lai-chuan and his family.

Our troops were on the march every day, sometimes fifty *li*, sometimes seventy. Large tracts of land stretched endlessly beneath our feet. The crops in the field, ripening, turned a dark gold. A few months later we were marching past black tracts of earth, gleaming and bare. Then wheat seeds were dropped on the vast land, wheat seeds with the power to push through mountains, afraid neither of the bitter cold nor wind and frost. The wheat germinated and sprouted, carpeting the black earth with tender green. In the spring of 1948 when the wheat was only half a foot high, and before Shoulitzu could mill that wheat flour she promised to keep for me, I visited Yenchuang a second time.

To trap and destroy an enemy contingent, our troops lured them into an encirclement. We wiped them out east of Yenchuang. After the battle, as usual, our unit stopped for a day or two to rest and regroup. I remembered Yenchuang and asked for half a day's leave.

It was already dark by the time I hurried down to the village. A strong smell of burnt cloth accosted me before I even entered Yenchuang. My heart began to pound. Was it possible that the

enemy we had just annihilated east of here had passed through here on their way?

What had happened to the village? And Shoulitzu? That gun of Old Ma, had they buried it or was it still slung over the shoulder of a Yenchuang villager? Bending slightly, I started to run towards the village.

"You there, halt!" With a shout, someone burst out of the darkness. His voice and his accent warmed my heart; someone from Yenchuang was standing guard. Once emancipated, they would never let history turn backwards, they would never let the old days come again.

"Old uncle," I cried, very much moved as I ran up to him. "It's me. It's me."

"Will you halt now!" With a click he pushed in the bolt. How I longed to rush up to the old man and hug him, but I had to obey his order. The old man with the gun came closer. I recognized him immediately in the starlight. He was Lai-chuan's father, that silent old man who kept a pipe clamped between his teeth all day. During the land reform he had never uttered a single sentence, but whenever there was a meeting, he was always there. It didn't matter whether it was a quick get-together meeting of the leaders or a discussion among the activists. He always came and listened whether he had been invited or not. Of course I never paid much attention to him, nor did I remember to ask him what he thought or whether he had anything to say. Now he was a sentry, gun in hand and looking serious. Lai-chuan's father was a Yenchuang sentry. In a stirred voice I addressed him by name. Taken aback, he moved closer to stare at me. When at last he recognized me, he tucked the gun under one arm, rushed up, gripped both of my hands in his large calloused ones and shook them again and again. "How we've longed for your return . . ." he said with a sob.

"You've had a hard time, uncle."

"It's not the hardships." With one hand he brushed away a tear while the other hand kept its hold on mine.

"Where are Lai-chuan and the others?" I felt a little apprehensive to see him doing sentry duty.

"Lai-chuan took the other young men of the village off to work at the front."

"Ah!" I was reassured to learn that they were safe.

"And sister-in-law?" I asked.

"You mean Little Chuan's ma. . . . She's here." For some reason he choked over the sentence.

I was eager to go and see Shoulitzu so I hurriedly bade the conscientious sentry goodbye. Before long at a crossroad I saw an old man pass by with a woman in custody. Since they and I were all in a hurry I didn't stop to make inquiries. But I recognized the woman as the wife of One-eyed Wolf, a despotic landlord now dead. By the light of the stars, I could see that a good number of the villagers' thatched cottages were gone. What was left were only broken sections of scorched mud walls and smashed crockery and torn cotton padding littering the ground on all sides. However, the charred rafters and beams had already been piled up, and the open ground was covered with stacks of mud bricks. In the hazy starlight the village appeared quiet and stern.

I found Shoulitzu in a thatched shed which had been put up in one corner of the yard where Lai-chuan's house had stood. She was slightly thinner and more sunburnt, and her eyes appeared even larger. Seated on a thin layer of wheat stalks, head bent, she was quietly mending a flour sieve, slowly weaving a fine and meticulous web over the holes with fine horsehair. It was as if she were still sitting on her own warm brick bed at home and the enemy had never been here, as if this low thatched shed, this pallet of wheat straw and the broken walls outside did not exist at all. Dear Shoulitzu, didn't you see what happened, or were you really untouched by it all? There you sat so quietly with bent head, getting implements ready for the wheat harvest.

Happening to look up, she discovered me. Her face registered no surprise, she only smiled. However, in contrast to her usual quiet and calm manner, she stood up and began bustling about. She lifted the lid off the pot, picked up the water ladle, gathered a bunch of hay and unwrapped a package. After all this bustling, she brought me a bowl of hot water. Now she quieted down, resuming her ordinary calm and composure as she took my hands and sat down by my side. I asked her how she managed when the enemy was here.

"Stayed out in the wilds," she answered simply.

"What about Lai-chuan?"

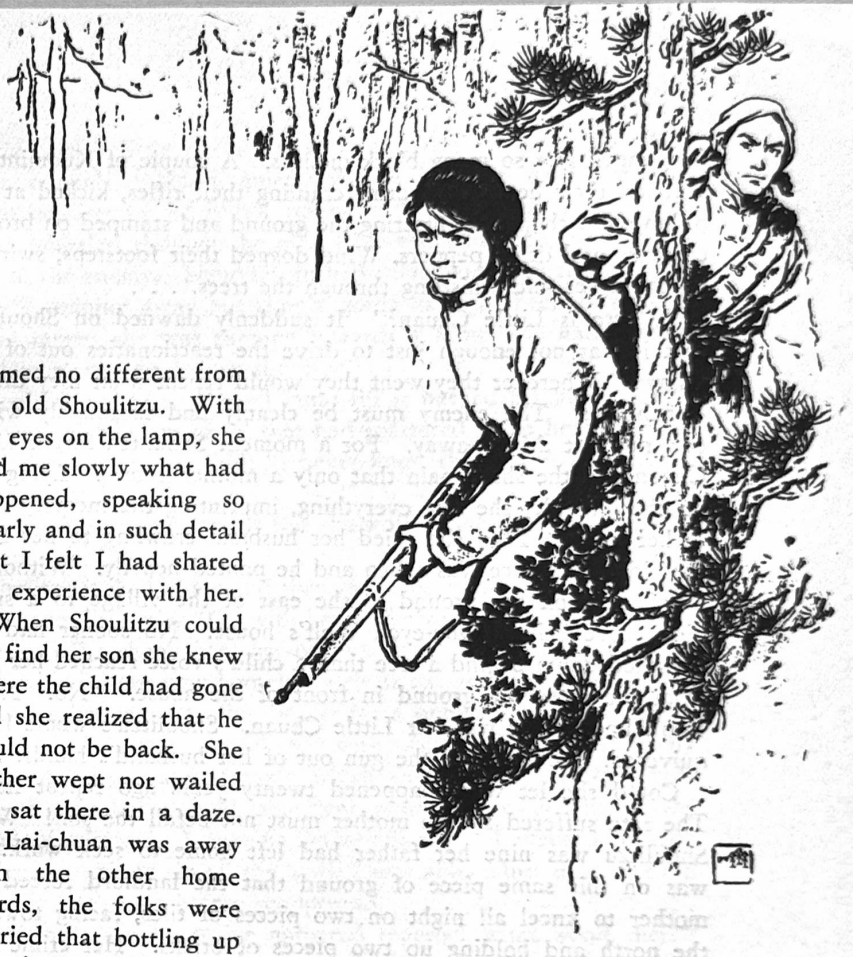
"Him? He took our home guards, shouldered that gun and went round and round, firing one shot here and another there." She smiled at this point, probably at the recollection of the effect of those occasional shots. Noticing that she was alone in the shed, I asked, "Where's Little Chuan?"

Shoulitzu avoided my inquiring glance. "You know," she began after a pause, "Little Chuan was so happy when we were given a share of land. After the wheat was sown he kept going down to the field for a look. He was counting on white wheat flour dumplings for New Year. You remember that the piece of land we got was close by the village. When the enemy came we went out to hide in the wilds. We were cold and hungry. The child's mind, however, was on the wheat field. 'Ma,' he said, 'will the reactionaries dig out our wheat seeds?' 'They won't be able to dig out all the seeds,' I assured him. 'What if the landlord takes back our land?' he asked. I told him that the land couldn't be moved but still he wasn't reassured.

" 'Ma, I'm small, let me steal back for a peep,' he pleaded. Do you think I'd let him go? The reactionaries had been in the village only two days and the wife of One-eyed Wolf was acting high and mighty. She invited the Kuomintang officers to her house and they talked of collecting back rents from the villagers, of killing and burning. How could I let Little Chuan go back to the village? The trouble was at midnight I fell asleep and the child ran back. . . ." Shoulitzu stopped to poke at the wick in the oil lamp and to calm her own emotions. I recalled the landlord's wife I had seen on my way — still wearing an expensive black silk padded jacket. I ground my teeth with wrath. Just then, the straw door curtain was lifted and an old man entered. "Lai-chuan's wife, that woman wants a drink of water. Should I let her have some?"

"No!" I cried. I felt the old man needn't have asked such a question.

"Better give her some, grandad, let her live to see us in control here." Shoulitzu told the old man calmly, very much like a commander. The old man agreed and went off convinced. Shoulitzu turned back to continue our chat. I watched her closely. She



seemed no different from the old Shoulitzu. With her eyes on the lamp, she told me slowly what had happened, speaking so clearly and in such detail that I felt I had shared the experience with her.

When Shoulitzu could not find her son she knew where the child had gone and she realized that he would not be back. She neither wept nor wailed but sat there in a daze. As Lai-chuan was away with the other home guards, the folks were worried that bottling up her feelings like that she'd make herself ill. They advised her to have a good cry, but she shook her head without a word, her eyes dry. It was not until the sun had sunk to the top of the mountain that she told the others: "I'll slip back quietly for a look. One look, that's all I want." She left there and then. No one could stop her. Afraid that she would come to harm, the villagers sent someone to fetch Lai-chuan.

The sun was setting. Night, so dreaded by the Chiang Kai-shek army, was descending. Shoulitzu scrambled up the mud hill at the west end of the village. Yenchuang, scorched and black, was still smoking. Burnt gateways, licked by the tongue of the

fire, gaped like so many black mouths. A couple of Kuomintang sentries, their heads low, arms cradling their rifles, kicked at the pillows and chopsticks littering the ground and stamped on broken crockery and dried peppers. Wind dogged their footsteps, swirling up the ashes and whistling through the trees. . . .

"Where is Little Chuan?" It suddenly dawned on Shoulitzu that it was not enough just to drive the reactionaries out of the village. Wherever they went they would repeat what they did at Yenchuang. The enemy must be cleanly and thoroughly wiped out, not just driven away. For a moment Shoulitzu forgot Little Chuan and the sharp pain that only a mother knows. Lying flat on the hill-side, she saw everything, imprinting the memory deep in her heart. Then she spied her husband crawling to her from the side. His face was ashen and he panted heavily. Without a word, he took her around to the east of the village to a small pine grove behind One-eyed Wolf's house. No sooner had she crouched down behind a tree than a child's voice reached her ears from the threshing ground in front of the house. "No. No, I won't kneel." It was her Little Chuan. Shoulitzu's whole heart quivered. She snatched the gun out of her husband's hands. . . .

Could she let what happened twenty years ago repeat itself? The fate suffered by the mother must not befall the son! When Shoulitzu was nine her father had left home to seek work. It was on this same piece of ground that the landlord forced her mother to kneel all night on two pieces of tiles, facing towards the north and holding up two pieces of bricks. Her crime was inability to pay the rent. Shoulitzu had stayed beside her mother, weeping through the bitter winter night. The next morning her mother's face was covered by a layer of frost. She could no longer persevere, and breathed her last on this same threshing ground. All night through, mother had repeated only three words in Shoulitzu's ear: "Do not forget."

The gun Old Ma had left went off with a bang. Not knowing the source of the shot, the enemy was thrown into confusion. Her hands trembling, Shoulitzu stood erect in front of the pinewoods, the gun in her hands. She felt a certain satisfaction, though she had not hit a single enemy. Lai-chuan pulled her into the woods and taking up the gun fired a shot into the midst of the enemy before he turned to flee with her. But his wife pulled away. She

ran forward a little for a last look at Little Chuan. The child lay in a pool of blood, quietly staring into the boundless sky. Enemy soldiers milled round yelling and crying, guns barked and bullets whistled through the air. Her son had died, refusing to yield to the enemy. Shoulitzu turned round and dashed off. She was not running away but simply going at high speed towards a certain target, she was running towards a target she had chosen. Yenchuang was no longer silent.

Shoulitzu poked at the oil lamp till it burned brighter. Carefully wiping the drop of oil that had spattered on to her finger on her jet black hair, she said, "I never knew that a gun is so good, so important."

"Now that you've caught the she-wolf, what do you intend to do with her?"

Shoulitzu looked at me and then she said, pronouncing the words one by one distinctly, "Do with her? We've got the Party's policy to go by. We shan't beat her or curse her. We just want her to watch us build our new homes, watch us eat and drink well. Then we'll have her taken to the district for a public trial."

Was it necessary to console her with words? In her, I felt only a firm confidence and strength which would quickly bring whole rows of new houses and abundant grain. It would speed the arrival of victory. I became impatient too. I wanted to rush back to my unit to do all the work I was able. Just then, the old man who had come before reappeared.

"Lai-chuan's wife, we've gathered together what wood there's left out of the ruins. It seems practically every family is short of timber for their house beams."

Shoulitzu considered the problem silently. Instead of hurrying her for a reply, the old man fished out his pipe, squatted down to smoke in a corner and patiently waited for her to deliberate the matter.

"I think, grandad, those who have trees can use their own, those without any should get timber from the pinewoods behind the One-eyed Wolf's house. Is that all right?"

"Sure," said the old man, again convinced that she was right and turning to leave.

"I'll go with you," Shoulitzu said on second thought. "Let's talk it over with the folks and see."

"Why bother? This is the right way." Grandad didn't think any more talk was necessary.

Shoulitzu stood up. She seemed to have forgotten my presence completely until she reached the door. "Let's continue our talk later," she said turning round. "But you must not go yet." She went out of the thatched shed quickly and disappeared in the darkness.

The shed was very low. Half-reclining against the pallet, I stared at the dark night outside through a crack in the mat door curtain. I could not picture Shoulitzu talking things over with the folks and distributing the wood among them. When I closed my eyes, it was the old Shoulitzu who appeared; she sat primly on the brick bed, saying with a smile, "Is it proper?" Quickly though, this image receded. In its place, appeared a woman with a sunburnt face whose movements were quick and sure. As she stood in the pinewoods, big trees fell at her feet and she solemnly told One-eyed Wolf's wife: "You just watch. Watch us build new homes, watch us eat and drink well, watch us, the people, rule the country."

. . . The lamplight blurred. Time flew past with a whirr of golden wings. I fell asleep.

Wakened by smoke choking me, I opened my eyes to discover that someone had put a quilt over me. The thatched shed was shrouded in smoke and steam. Shoulitzu sat by the stove at the door feeding the fire. Veiled by wisps of white smoke, her face seemed softer and more serene in the flickering firelight, not nearly as militant as the face of the Shoulitzu in my dream.

"It's not yet midnight. Sleep a little more," she said when she saw me pushing away the quilt.

"It's about time. Have you finished your business?"

Shoulitzu sighed. "With Lai-chuan and the home guards gone we have to build our homes and protect them at the same time. It's a heavy responsibility."

The home guards had gone to help the PLA at the front. Those left behind had shouldered the task of guarding the community interests. The masters of Yenchuang now had strength enough to go beyond their own homes. They were pushing history forward.

"The responsibility may be heavy, but you people are doing pretty well."

"What do you mean pretty well?" Shoulitzu turned her head to take in the things round her with a glance. "If we manage to get all the cottages built before wheat harvest, it'll really be good." Her voice was full of gladness though there was no smile on her face.

Well, I'd seen what I had wanted to see and could feel reassured about the folks I'd been anxious about. The night air was chilly. It must have been past midnight. I stood up and adjusted my puttees. I had to go.

"Wait a second!" Shoulitzu got up. She lifted the lid of the pot, letting out a jet of steam which rose to the ceiling. The pot was half filled with boiling water. In the top half slabbed against the sides of the pot were six flatcakes of red *kaoliang* flour. She filled my canteen with boiled water, wrapped the flatcakes in a piece of cloth and put them in my hands. "I made the cakes for you to eat on the way."

"Why have you done that, Shoulitzu?" I could see there was wild grass gruel in an earthen bowl but here she was giving me good *kaoliang* flour. It made me a little angry with her.

"We'll be all right as soon as we harvest the wheat. . . ." Shoulitzu dropped her eyes. "I do want to give you something good now. . . ."

"When the wheat's harvested, I'll come again and you can give me something good." I put the flatcakes back in her hands and picked up the hot canteen. I turned to leave, knowing that she would feel bad. But what else could I do? After a few steps I noticed that she had not come out with me. She stood where she was with a wooden look, the package of cakes in her hands. The sight made me uneasy. "Shoulitzu," I turned round to say. "I'll be coming back in a couple of months. Will you have white flour milled and waiting for me?"

"I'll send it to you." This said in a tone that seemed to end the question, she remained motionless. I had to leave now. After I had gone some distance, I looked back. She was leaning against the door of the thatched shed, the steaming cakes still in her hands. With the faint light of the lamp behind her she seemed bigger in stature. Somewhere from the village came the clop,

clop of wood being chopped; the villagers of Yenchuang were making their beams.

I went further and further away from Yenchuang but I felt that along with victory, Shoulitzu was close behind me. She was there behind every fighter, that package of steaming flatcakes in her hands, her sunburnt face serene and resolute. When we reached camp after a march and when we came back from the front lines for a short pause, late at night or early in the morning, as soon as we knocked lightly at a villager's door she would appear promptly to unbolt and open it. When we were tired and hungry there was always warm water for our feet and piping hot potato soup or millet gruel. When we set out again, the narrow long ration bags slung over our shoulders would contain the precooked wheat flour or dried slices of steamed bread she had made for us. When we felt hot and parched on our march, she appeared with buckets of cold tea. Sometimes she silently slipped a couple of warm boiled eggs into our pockets, at times it was a handful of red dates. Our feet were shod in shoes she had stitched and stockings she had made. Into our ears she poured only one request: "Wipe out the reactionaries' god-damned army and defend our good life."

Snow swirled silently and stealthily. An old worm-eaten tree close by squeaking under the weight of the snow finally collapsed with a crash. Lamplights flashed in villages near and far. Here and there sparks floated from cottage chimneys. The people and the army along the Huaihai front were happily spending the last few hours of 1948.

In my mind I saw Yenchuang lying like the villages near by: Snow covered the wide land but people were living in newly built cottages, celebrating the New Year. And Shoulitzu? She . . . perhaps she was sitting with legs folded under her on the warm brick bed. . . . It was still snowing, the snow-flakes falling thicker and thicker. The row of footprints on the road was quickly covered by a layer of new snow. I tried to imagine how Shoulitzu looked now.

There was the cracking of whips down the road as a team of carts appeared. The carters seemed to be all women. Their shrill voices calling to the animals reached my ears before the carts

were near enough for me to see them clearly. The woman in the lead was of medium height; her hair and mouth were muffled under a big cloth shawl. I spied a pair of fine wide eyes. She strode along, holding her horse's bridle.

This road led to the front line region a bit further down. Where did they think they were taking the carts?

"What have you got on those carts, comrades?" I stopped them. The one in front called to the animals to a halt and eyed me from head to toe.

"Grain," she replied.

"Do you know where you'll be if you go any further? Where are you taking your grain?"

"We don't know. We're just following our team leader." By then the other carters had come close enough to answer.

"And who's the team leader?" My eyes rested on the one with the fine eyes leading the line of carts. She smiled.

"I'm not the team leader. There," she said, indicating the footprints in the snow with her chin. "Our team leader has gone ahead to make contact. We are following her footprints, we can't go wrong." The clever young woman answered distinctly and quite steadily. For some reason, her attitude made me imagine things and this fancy made me feel closer to them.

"But how dangerous it is for you to go on this way! Suppose your leader blunders into the enemy?"

The women carters were at first taken aback but immediately the one with the fine eyes burst into a chuckle. Turning to her mates she said, "Our leader blunder into the enemy?"

A burst of laughter greeted her words. I was the object of their laughter and they were quite merciless in their mirth.

"Our team leader went to the front when our army was fighting at Nienchuang and at Tsinan. D'you think she'd get lost and blunder into the enemy!" One of the carters said this with pride. Apparently they had a capable team leader whose prestige was very high.

"No matter what you say, comrades, your carts had better not go any further," I continued patiently.

"Can't be done. Without our team leader's orders, we can't stop." Fine Eyes cracked her whip as she talked and made ready to go. At that moment a stream of dazzling flares sprang

into the air. The next moment the trees and their shadows were quivering all round us. Big snow-flakes danced like so many white butterflies in the strong glare against a background of silvery white. The dozen or so women carters stood out vividly before my eyes, militant and brave. Some wore their hair in a bun at the nape of the neck, others plaited their hair into a big braid which hung down their backs. All of them wore the same leather belts round their padded gowns with a water ladle at the waist. The flares did not arouse their attention much as they returned to the carts in their charge and got ready to go on. I scrutinized their faces one by one feeling for some reason that I might find that familiar face among them. It was a crazy idea, of course. They filed past, hands on the bridles, walking close beside their carts, trailing the footprints their team leader had left behind.

"Hey, comrades, what's your team leader's name?" Suddenly I felt an urgent desire to know the name of this team leader.

"Yen Cheng-ying." Their answer came back to me from a distance away.

"Yen Cheng-ying!" I couldn't say whether I was glad or disappointed. "Why isn't it Shoulitzu?"

Back in my billet I found on my rucksack a wooden bowl full of newly fried beans. This must be the doing of Big Dragon, the son of my host. I had heard him coaxing his mother for fried beans in the morning, besides, he'd already told me he'd treat me to beans.

I placed the beans by my pillow and blew out the lamp.

I was wakened by voices and muffled laughter in the middle of the night. Opening my eyes, I found that the women carters I met on the way had arrived. They were warming themselves round the fire and talking in low tones evidently trying not to wake me. As I appreciated their consideration, I lay quietly pretending to still be asleep.

"It's all very well to say take our grain to the front line. We haven't even heard a single shot. Call that sending grain to the front line?" This was the girl with the fine wide eyes. Judging by her tone she meant to take the grain right into the trenches before she'd feel satisfied.

"Weren't we told to take it to the Rear-line Services and Supply? Naturally that must be a bit behind the front line."

"Who says? Didn't our team leader say before the soldiers and horses make a move the grain and fodder must arrive first? We must get there even before the Liberation Army."

Gradually, they forgot about the person who was supposed to be sleeping.

"Can you guess why Erh-man is so anxious to get closer to the front line?" A new question was posed by the woman sitting beside my bed. Both those who wanted to send the grain to the front and those who were satisfied with sending it to Rear-line Services and Supply crowded up to ask, "Why?"

"To look for someone."

"Ha, ha. . . ." The sound of their merriment nearly burst through the roof.

"Ha, ha . . . why do you turn back in the end?" I was just going to join in their merriment when suddenly the door opened. Behind the rush of cold air and snow into the room a woman entered. Was it my imagination or was she real? Yes, it was Shoulitzu. She wore a man's long padded gown, with the front tucked up under her sash. Her head was wrapped in a towel. Standing in the doorway, her cheeks crimson from the cold, she said, "Sisters, our animals have been fed and we've warmed up. Let's go."

"Shoulitzu!" I bolted from the bed.

"Oh!" She walked up to my bed, recognized me and was overwhelmed. Her hands gripped mine tightly.

"Is everything all right at Yenchuang?" I didn't know where to begin.

"Yes, yes, everything's fine. The wheat harvest was excellent last summer and the autumn crops were pretty good. Lai-chuan joined the army last spring."

"So you know our team leader," cried the merry women carters, surprised and delighted, crowding round our shoulders.

"Look at her, is she the kind to blunder into the enemy?" Fine Eyes glanced at her team leader with pride. Still remembering our conversation on the road, she was challenging me.

"No, she's not that kind." I looked at Shoulitzu and saw in my mind's eye the woman who sat on the brick bed with her legs folded under her.

"Why have you changed your name?"

"When I was admitted into the Communist Party the Party branch gave me this name." Shoulitzu talked in the same old quiet and shy manner.

It was she who had gone to the front lines when we were fighting in Nienchuang and at Tsinan. It was she who went where the shells and bullets flew. I remembered how she sat on the ground amid the rubble quietly mending a flour sieve with horsehair. Yes, it was she, this same Shoulitzu. As a matter of fact I had no trouble imagining her there.

"And the cottages? Have they all been put up?" These weren't the things I wanted to talk about but it was what I said.

"Yes, we've rebuilt all the cottages long ago. One-eyed Wolf's wife was given a public trial. . . ." The woman who had sat beside my bed didn't give Shoulitzu a chance to finish but cut in to say, "Look, our team leader's met an old friend. Why, oh, why can't our little sister Erh-man there find the one she's been looking for?"

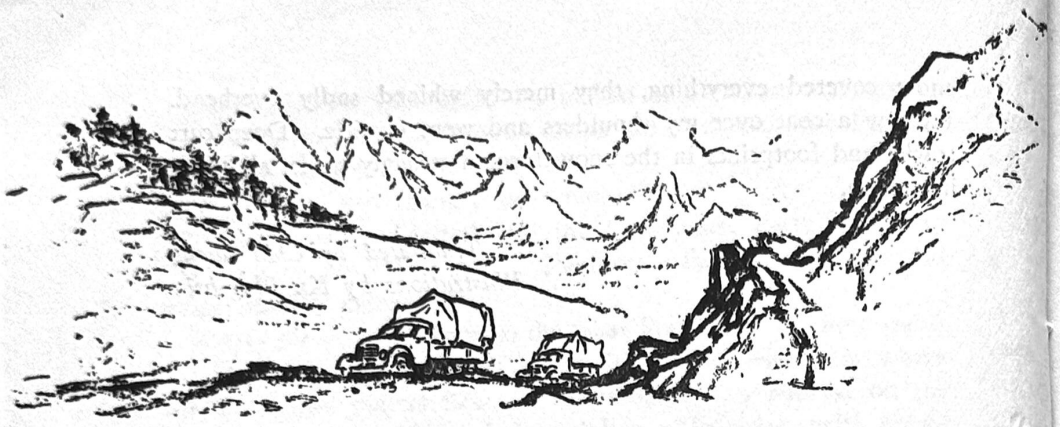
"Ha, ha. . . ." The laughter that followed was so loud and merry that the horses outside started to neigh in alarm. "It's getting late," said Shoulitzu getting to her feet. "When our carts reach their destination and we've finished our job, I'll come back to see you." With that she took her carters away leaving the room like a gust of wind. The next instant, the clear cracking of whips sounded outside, and in a rumble of wheels and the snorting of the horses, they left.

How silly of me! Was there any need for me to go for a look? Since things were all right at Yenchuang and the people were all right, naturally new cottages had been built and crops planted in the fields. The crops were growing and so were the people. All this was as plain as day. Was there any need to make a third visit to Yenchuang?

Pale white light began to show on the eastern horizon. Enemy transport planes were droning again, probably attempting an air-drop in spite of the snow. But failing to locate their target when

snow covered everything, they merely whined sadly overhead. I threw a coat over my shoulders and went outside. Deep cart tracks and footprints in the snow formed straggly trails, all leading south.

Translated by Chin Sheng
Illustrations by Ku Ping-hsin



WANG TSUNG-YUAN

Aunt Hui

A Story Within a Story

At the Conference of Young Activists in Socialist Construction in the Tsaidam Basin, I met a girl from Shanghai named Li Wan-li. Three years and more on the Chinghai-Tibetan Plateau had not changed that charm of manner we associate with girls from the lower Yangtse Valley, but her talk and behaviour were coloured with the verve and spirit of the "people of the plateau." She was attending the conference as the representative of a team of girl surveyors — four of them in all — who had lost contact with their base and spent seven gruelling days and nights on the Tangla Mountains, brilliantly completing the initial survey of a large region rich in mineral wealth. She was the team-leader.

"You look born and bred to the plateau," I assured her. "It can't be easy, surely, for girls from the south on their first arrival here?"

"So that's what's puzzling you!" Her right eyebrow shot up mischievously. "It's very interesting, that, but how can I explain? Suppose I tell you the first lesson the plateau taught me."

And this is the story she told me.

One late December afternoon in 1955, a goods lorry stopped at Hsiaonanchuan Station in the Kunlun Mountains. The seventeen-year-old girl seated by the driver had just graduated from a geological school. That was me — Li Wan-li.

Dusk was falling, the lights in the station tents were lit and the evening meal was probably being served. Puffs of white steam escaped from the tent tops. Men in fur-lined coats and felt boots were trooping past, talking, laughing and clinking enamel bowls and mugs.

I felt unwell, out of sorts, and had no appetite. I had been shivering ever since leaving Golmo and most of my joints were aching. Now, worse still, I had a splitting headache. I was rather frightened too of the "mountain sickness" about which I had heard so much; for this was only 3,800 metres above sea level, whereas I was going to work at an altitude of over 4,200 on the average. If I went on aching like this, how could I function?

As I was giving way to these gloomy thoughts, a dark figure loomed up outside the window and the door opened with a bang. A small wooden case was thrust in.

"D'you mind giving this box to Aunt Hui, comrade?"

"Who's Aunt Hui?" I asked, quite at sea.

"Don't you know Aunt Hui at the Kunlun Mountain Pass?" He threw an astonished glance at me. "Well, just tell Young Liu, your driver, then."

I agreed vaguely, too lazy to ask what the case held, though I could hear a queer sort of scuffling inside as if it contained a live creature.

After quite a while the driver came back with a mug of milk which he put into my hands without a word. My first impulse was to refuse, but one glance at his expression made me think better of it. When Young Liu spotted the wooden case he asked crossly, "Who brought that in? The front of the lorry is for driv-

ing, not for storage." He picked up the box to carry it to the back.

"It's for someone called Aunt Hui," I said listlessly.

"For Aunt Hui? Why didn't you say so earlier?" He brought the case in again, glued one ear to it to listen, and let out a laugh. Seeing that there was no other space in front, he dumped the box unceremoniously under my legs.

"Are we going on?" I asked feebly.

"We'll get to the Kunlun Mountain Pass tonight," he said. I must have shown my dismay, for he added: "It's not far, just over a hundred-kilometres." With that he picked up the crank and went out to start the engine.

When I first got on Young Liu's lorry at Golmo and he heard I was a graduate of a geological school who had volunteered for work on the plateau, he couldn't have been more friendly. He made me sit in front, found a rug to put over my knees, and embarked on a series of stories about searching for treasures in the plateau: the discovery of coal, the "magic waters" of the Nagchuka River, and the huge crystal sixty centimetres across. . . .

I was in low spirits though from not feeling well, and too fagged out to say much. Something in my behaviour set him against me. Then he sulked like a small boy, ignoring me. If he had to say something, he kept his head turned away, refusing to look at me.

That was all right with me—I wasn't going to tell him that I was ill, that I felt sick and dizzy. I didn't want his sympathy and pity!

I remember, when things were at their worst, asking him, "Comrade Liu . . . when we get to that mountain pass, whatever it's called, will there be any transport back to Golmo?"

At that he did turn to stare at me. "How would I know?" He sounded as cold as ice. "I'm not the station-master." A few seconds later he muttered under his breath: "Pah, not even up to the Kunlun grass!"

I didn't catch the name of the grass clearly. Even if I had, I shouldn't have understood. I was busy mulling over my own problem: Should I press on, or really go back to Golmo?

I closed my eyes as my thoughts rose and fell, they were as confused as a skein of entangled flax. After an interval Young Liu suddenly said, "Hey! Out you get!"

I opened my eyes to see Young Liu outside the lorry with the wooden box under one arm. Picking up my rucksack, I stepped down; but my knees buckled and I would have fallen against the lorry if he hadn't caught my arm.

Clearly visible in the bright moonlight was a small station where three or four lorries were already parked. To the south lay the vast white plateau; behind me was an inky black mountain, and before me a row of curious little houses with lamplight streaming from two or three windows. I thought my eyes must be playing me a trick. What houses could there be in this desolate spot? In the last thousand *li* or so we had not even seen many tents, so that the sight of these houses was most astonishing.

In a daze, I followed Young Liu to a well-lit building. The door curtain lifted, warm air rushed out to meet us.

"Here's a visitor for you, Aunt Hui!" called Young Liu.

In that steamy atmosphere, I could just make out the robust figure of a woman, her sleeves rolled up over her elbows. A lump of dough in her hand, she came towards us.

"Well, young limb of the devil!" she cried. "Have you brought my rabbits?"

"Your rabbits are here and won't run away," said Young Liu. "Hurry up and find this woman comrade somewhere to rest."

"Woman comrade? Is this another of your jokes?" Screwing up her eyes, Aunt Hui came over to me. "Well, I declare! Where did this pretty face spring from? If you're not well, child, you shall have a good rest here."

In a jiffy she had made up the bed, helped me to sit down and taken off my overcoat for me. "Are you on your way to Lhasa too?" she asked. "It's perishing cold on the road. But never mind. Folk new to these parts always feel out of sorts for the first day or so. You'll soon get over it. Lie down now, and if there's anything you fancy to eat I'll make it for you."

Aunt Hui had plump, rosy cheeks and fine, healthy teeth which flashed white when she smiled. As she patted my shoulder with one large, capable hand, a flood of warmth surged through me.

On the verge of collapse, I was just going to lie down when the snow-white sheets and silk quilt reminded me that I hadn't taken off my muddy boots. I struggled to a sitting position.

"What's the matter?" Guessing what was on my mind, Aunt Hui pushed me firmly back. "You lie down, child. I'll take them off for you. Don't lean too far back, I've a brood of chicks on that *kang* behind you."

As if in confirmation, cheeping sounded from near my head.

I recalled that in a report we'd heard from the head of the Highway Bureau at Golmo, mention had been made of an ordinary village woman who was running a "drivers' home" in the depth of the mountains, providing warmth and comfort on their long journeys. Could this be the same woman? Before I could have a closer look at her, Aunt Hui turned to speak to Young Liu. She spoke fast, her voice was clear as a bell, and when something amused her she gave the merry, unaffected laugh of candid, open-hearted souls without a care in the world.

I must have been lying on a heated *kang* like those in the villages of the north, for presently I was warm from head to foot. The cold which had seeped through my bones melted away.

I woke some time later uncertain where I was. Aunt Hui and Young Liu were nowhere to be seen, while outside a gale had sprung up. The wind shrieked and roared as it buffeted sand and gravel this way and that. Indoors, though, was as quiet and snug as could be. Looking about me more carefully, I discovered that this was no house but a small stone cave hollowed out of the hill-side, like those slate-lined caves in northern Shensi we'd stayed in during our field work. There was a pleasant smell of pickles which I traced to three gleaming pickle jars neatly ranged in one corner. The black stove, too, was polished till it shone, and something was simmering cheerfully in a pot. On the frame of the *kang* was pasted a scissor-cut of the "Phoenix Greets the Sun," and beside this hung a large picture frame. No one could have imagined from this interior and the whole atmosphere here that we were on a mountain 4,000 metres above sea level. It seemed you had only to lift the door curtain to see hill-sides covered with *kaoliang*. What manner of woman was this Aunt Hui, I wondered. By what magic had she transported this little home from the interior to the plateau?

To add to my amazement, that same instant — miaow! — a big brown cat jumped off the window ledge in front of me. Tail in the air, shaking the dust off its fur, it stretched luxuriously before springing lightly on to the kitchen range.

I wondered if I was dreaming. Then the blissful warmth made me close my eyes again.

When next I woke, there was a buzz of talk in the room.

"That makes this an even better Drivers' Home!" said someone.

"If not, d'you think I'd drive over a hundred kilometres after dark?" demanded Young Liu. "I did it for the sake of your home-made noodles!"

Over the din of their laughter and chaff, Aunt Hui called, "All right! That's enough! Out you go now, we want to sleep. Young Liu, remember to call this lass tomorrow."

"Call her?" retorted Young Liu. "She can wait for a lorry back to Golmo, the softy."

"You hold your tongue," said Aunt Hui. "She's only a slip of a girl. After roughing it for a while, I dare say she'll make a better showing than you. On this road where people come from all parts of the country, I've seen not a few of such girls."

It's no fun, I assure you, when you hear yourself being discussed like this and can't get up and join in!

After a little more chat, the men trooped out. Then she came softly to the *kang* and laid a warm hand on my forehead. "Wake up, lass! Wake up!" she called gently. "You must have something to eat."

I opened my eyes and saw that she had one hand behind her back. With a mysterious smile she said, "Guess what I've brought you!" Then, slowly, she produced her surprise.

"If they aren't fresh leeks!" I exclaimed. "Wherever did you get them? Did one of the lorries bring them?" I'd eaten nothing on the journey but bean vermicelli, dried day-lily, salted turnips and peanuts. These fresh leeks smelled of spring.

"There'd be nothing special about them if they'd been brought here!" Aunt Hui chuckled. "We grew them ourselves!"

"You can grow vegetables here?" I could hardly believe my ears, because from what I'd seen, the closer we'd come to the

Kunlun Mountains the more wild and barren they looked. All I'd seen growing were sparse, stunted grass and lichens.

"I should think so!" said Aunt Hui. "We have a small greenhouse. I'll take you to see it tomorrow when you're better. We grow tomatoes too."

She wouldn't hear of my getting up but brought the food to the *kang*. A delicious bowl of fine noodles made me sweat and helped to cure my headache. Aunt Hui mothered me so kindly and impressed me so much that I was tempted to tell her what was troubling me. She wouldn't have laughed. But I couldn't bring myself to say such things.

As Aunt Hui arranged the quilts on the *kang*, she remarked, "Sleeping here you'll be a bit of company for me while my old man's away. He's gone off as guide to an oil-prospecting team."

Watching this brisk woman in her thirties, who was brimming over with vitality, a feeling of gratitude swept over me. Here she was living, for all I knew, without another woman within a radius of a thousand *li*, no one with whom to exchange confidences. Wasn't she ever lonely?

There wasn't a shadow of loneliness on Aunt Hui's face, however.

Just then the door was flung open to admit a gust of wind and a hulking young fellow who cried gruffly:

"Aunt Hui! There's something I forgot. . . ."

"Aren't you in bed yet, young devil? What is it?"

"Station-master Li in Damshune asks when you'll let him have those chicks you promised him." As if this were his home, the youngster pulled open a drawer and took out a cigarette which he calmly proceeded to smoke. "And Old Chu of the Warm Springs Station wants to know when you'll go there and give them that lesson."

"Well, you tell Station-master Li that the chicks aren't out of the nest yet. I'll send them in a day or two when the weather's warmer. He'll get his share! That lesson will have to wait for a few days. With Old Hui away, I've got two jobs on my hands. And now get out, my good man! We want to sleep!"

"Right! About turn! Quick march!" With a mock salute, the young fellow made off.

"What lessons are you giving, Aunt Hui?" I asked in surprise.

"Oh, that was just his silly way of talking," she said. "What lesson? Old Chu of the Warm Springs Station wants me to show them how I make my noodles. . . . Never mind that. I'll tell you something. Are you feeling better?"

I nodded. "Ever so much better!"

"That's the way it is. In a couple of days you'll be right as rain again. Take it from me." Her chin on the pillow, playing with the end of my plait, Aunt Hui embarked on her story.

"If you knew what happened when I first came, you'd split your sides with laughing! I got off the lorry, took one look at this place, and burst into tears. You know what I'd brought? Cabbage seeds, leek seeds, pumpkin seeds, a couple of hens and a cat. I'd every intention of settling down and making this my home. But it just didn't seem possible. You had to wear padded clothes the whole year round, no crops would grow, there wasn't a tree in sight. I cried and cried. I must have shed tears enough to fill two tubs. And I lashed out at my old man: 'You lied to me, you heartless brute. You wrote that this was such a wonderful place. . . .' My old man's easy-going, he just laughed and said in that slow way of his: 'It's not so good just now, but we can make something of it.' 'Get away with you!' said I. 'By the time you've made anything of it, your old woman's shanks will be fit for sticks to beat the gongs!' We kept at it hammer and tongs till Old Hui lost his temper and swore at me, 'You're not up to the grass on Kunlun!' "

"What grass? What did he say?" Young Liu, I remembered, had used the same derogatory expression about me on the way.

"He swore at me, 'You're not up to the grass on Kunlun!' " repeated Aunt Hui. "That's the worst thing you can say to anyone in these parts. Have you heard it somewhere before?"

I quickly shook my head and blushed scarlet down to my neck.

"Anyone who has been around in these parts knows the expression. I didn't catch on though at the time. Just be patient and I'll explain as we go along — there's a story behind it."

"I'd decided to go back again after two days, when I'd washed his clothes and bedding — the place was dirty as a pigsty. Then we had a meal and that made me see red. Pointing to the dishes, I asked:

" 'What's all this, Old Hui?'

"He stared at me blankly and said, 'Sea cucumber, dried day-lily, black fungus and a bit of tinned pork. What's the matter? Don't you like it?'

" 'Such expensive food — how dare I say I don't like it? It makes me feel bad, that's what. The whole of the journey I've been horrified by the way you waste good food like this. Tell me, where's your cook from?'

" 'Where's he from?' My old man sighed. 'From the camel transport team. He's a camel-driver.'

"I saw light then. You couldn't blame the cook. He knew all about feeding camels but not the first thing about feeding men. Next day I barged into the kitchen and said to him, 'Let me give you a hand, mate, for a couple of days.' I may have clumsy hands and awkward feet, but I can do plain home cooking — steamed cakes, dumplings, noodles of different kinds and so on. In three days I prepared them nine different kinds of meal. The drivers who stopped off here asked, 'Who cooked this?' They came carrying their bowls into the kitchen and said, 'Whatever happens, aunt, you mustn't go!' Some of them threatened in fun, 'If you go, the whole lot of us will leave the Chinghai-Tibetan Highway.' I told them, 'You can't get round me with that sort of talk. This place gives me the creeps — I'm not staying. . . .' "

"How did you come to change your mind?" I asked.

"Just you listen." Aunt Hui rolled over into a more comfortable position. "Where was I? Oh yes, telling you about my old man. . . ." She reached out to lift the frame down from the wall and lay it beside the pillow.

It was a good-sized, varnished frame with a striped pattern on it. Half the space inside was taken up by a cluster of different photographs, most of them with inscriptions like "A Souvenir for Aunt Hui." In the other half was a handsome certificate which read, "Awarded to the Model Cook, Comrade Ho Lien-chen." Next to the certificate, looking most incongruous, was a withered yellowish grass.

"Is this yours?" I indicated the certificate.

"Yes, but never mind that. Listen. . . . See, there's my old man." Aunt Hui pointed to a four-inch half-length portrait. The man in the picture, who looked in his forties, was wearing a baggy, wrinkled cap. He had a short moustache, high cheek-bones and a generous mouth. You could tell at a glance that he was straight and honest.

Half smiling as her eyes rested on this photograph, Aunt Hui said, "He's one of the best. He was township head in the interior till 1954, when they sent him to help build the Chinghai-Tibetan Highway, and later on he became station-master here. These caves, these few caves in the rock, were made by him and some others on the sick list that year when they came here to recover."

"What!" I could hardly credit this.

"See this grass? Nothing much to look at, is it? That's the grass folk mean when they say: You're not up to the grass on Kunlun."

My heart pounded as I peered carefully at the insignificant withered plant. On its bare stem hung a few small flowers, not unlike snowdrops.

"Do be quick and tell me the story of the grass, Aunt Hui."

"All in good time, child. I'm telling you.

"In '54, when the highway was laid up to Mount Tangla, my old man came down with scurvy. He was sent to the Kunlun Moun-

tains here by the leadership with a nurse and seven other patients for a rest. This was a depot in those days with nothing but two tents and a few thousand sacks of flour piled out in the open. The sick men were just recovering their strength when the rainy season started, making the road too muddy for anyone to leave. Most of them got homesick. The Kansu men thought of golden Changyeh and silver Wuwei, the Shensi men missed their 800 *li* of level land, the Hopei men thought of the sea of maize on the northern plain. Men just over an illness always long to eat good things, and they dreamed about green vegetables, fresh meat, big carp. . . .

"My old man was no better than the others, hankering all the time after the loess caves of northern Shensi, pickled cabbage, gruel of lentils and our local dish. But being the leader, he couldn't let on to the others. When the craving got to be bad, he went for a climb in the hills and saw this grass.

"He didn't know what it was. It's not really a grass nor yet a flower either. He remembered that when they arrived it had just been sprouting. Now in little more than a month it had flowered and seeded. The warm spell is very short in the Kunlun Mountains, yet somehow this plant managed. As soon as the frost was over, it popped out of the ground and without even waiting to grow leaves pushed upwards and shot up three or four inches, then made haste to flower and seed. By the next frost, it had successfully completed its assignment!

"My old man squatted there to stare at this plant for some time. Then he stood up and stamped his foot, swearing to himself: 'You're nothing but a puny plant, not more than four inches high and no thicker than my finger, yet you can strike root on the plateau and flower and seed. I'm a member of the mighty Communist Party — don't tell me I'm not up to you!' He pulled up the grass and carried it back like a treasure to their tent. He called the others to a meeting. His mates assured him solemnly as if taking a pledge: "Can't believe that we're not up to this grass, Old Hui. Hang it over our heads!' That very day they started making these caves. I don't mind telling you it was hard work. All they had between them were a shovel, a broken pick and a pile

of the pack-sticks the camel-drivers use. But they gritted their teeth, those men, and hollowed out the caves. One night when Old Hui showed me this grass and told me the whole story till midnight, though I'm not a great one for crying, the tears welled up in my eyes. . . . And the saying has gone the rounds ever since. . . ."

I clenched my teeth tight as I listened, deeply moved. Then and there, in that cave, I too took an oath before that plucky little grass.

"And so you stayed on, did you?" I asked Aunt Hui.

"That's right. And so I stayed on. You know, child, the men with the hardest jobs on this highway are the drivers." Aunt Hui rolled a little closer to stroke my hair as she went on: "Night and day, no matter how heavy the snow, how bitter the cold, they can't knock off! At most stations they don't eat well or sleep well either. If the lorry breaks down, they may go for four or five days without a hot meal. If the lorry gets into an icy stream or a swamp, they have to jump in too! Many's the time I've had them come in here clanking as they walked in helmets and coats of mail all of ice, which melted into a great puddle by the stove. They're flesh and blood like the rest of us, aren't they? I was so sorry for them that I'd hurry to find a change of clothes, to get hot soup and hot water for them. Remember how, when we fought Chiang Kai-shek, we womenfolk used to look after the wounded, washing clothes, carrying stretchers, taking them tea and water? These men today are just like the old soldiers of the People's Liberation Army. . . . Old Hui sometimes says he's educated me. I soon put him in his place. The fact is, it's these youngsters hammered out of steel. . . ." Aunt Hui turned to look at the clock and cried out in dismay, "Gracious! I'm a regular old gossip — it's after two. I was so busy talking I forgot you're not well."

"Never mind, there's a dear," I begged her. "Do go on."

"No, there'd be no end to it, and you've another journey before you tomorrow." Aunt Hui sat up, tucked my quilt round me and asked if I wanted anything to eat or drink.

"I don't want anything. You've been hard at it all day — hurry up and sleep."

"Sleep? I don't know how much sleep there'll be for me tonight," she said as she unbuttoned her jacket. "Listen to that wind outside! It's in weather like this that accidents happen on the road."

She gently picked up the brown cat which, curled up on her leg, was purring contentedly. "Off you go! Don't spend all the time sleeping!" she said. "Go and see if the rats have come out." With a smile to me, she confessed: "I've a soft spot in my heart for cats and dogs. I've seven or eight fine hens too, so that folk passing here can eat new-laid eggs. I tell you, child, there are chicks hatched out here in Totoho, Mount Tangla and Adomadma. Wherever you go you'll hear my cocks crowing. . . ."

That night. I had so much to think about. Dear Aunt Hui, you probably have no idea what a tremendous impression all you said and did that evening made on a youngster.

I lay there thinking till cock-crow. And take it from me, a cock's crow had never sounded so like music in my ears before. The bold confident crowing rose above the howling of the wind and pierced the black night as if life itself were calling. It crossed my mind that at this very instant the cocks sent out by Aunt Hui must be crowing on the top of Mount Tangla, on the boundless plateau, on the banks of the tumbling Tungtien River. Everywhere men would be hearing that call to battle, that triumphant song of the pioneers on the plateau.

A little later I heard movements outside. Soon this was followed by the sound of lorries starting up. I got up hastily and dressed. Maybe Young Liu wasn't coming to call me after all. Aunt Hui was not in the room either. She probably went out while I was half dozing. I wanted very much to see her again, but there might not be time. Seeing her photograph under the glass sheet on the desk, I took it out and put it in my diary. On one of my own snaps I wrote:

Aunt Hui,

I've taken your photograph and here is one of mine. I hope I'll be able to grow into someone like you.

Your student, Li Wan-li

Having slipped this under the glass, I picked up my rucksack and went into the yard. The wind had dropped, but

there was no sign of Aunt Hui or the others. A few paces on, round the fires smelling of petrol and burnt cloth, I actually found Young Liu starting up his motor.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, cold as ice. "Did you leave something in my lorry?"

I said, "Let's go, I want to go on."

"Forget it. Just stay here till you find transport back to Golmo."

"What do you mean?" I raised my voice indignantly. "Aren't I even up to the Kunlun grass?"

Young Liu was quite taken aback when I said that. He stared at me hard till slowly a cryptic sort of smile spread over his face. Then he reached out and opened the door.

This incident had made such an unforgettable impression on Li Wan-li that she spoke for a good two or three hours, telling me the story with all its ramifications.

Nor is that all. This throws fresh light on the story of the Kunlun grass which has spread throughout the Chinghai-Tibetan Plateau. When anyone mentions the team of four girl surveyors, something is sure to be said about the grass and Aunt Hui, and that starts a whole series of anecdotes about the nine caves.

"Does Aunt Hui still live there?" I asked.

"She's still there," said Li Wan-li. "She's station-master now instead of her husband, who's become director of one of the nearby mines. You won't see those nine caves, though, because they've built a two-storeyed building there and a whole lot of greenhouses."

"Do you often see her?"

"Oh yes. I spend the night there whenever I pass that way. I like to take the new comrades there too, to see the grass and learn the first lesson of the plateau."

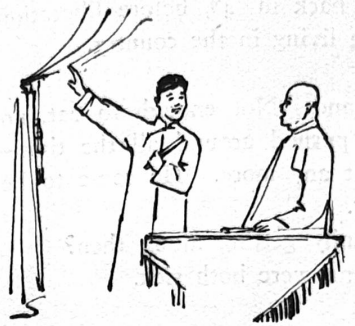
"This makes a splendid start," said I. "Now tell me about yourself."

"Why, there's nothing worth telling about me." The girl from Shanghai flushed. "Our story's a very simple one. In any case, you'll find it all in the material printed for the conference!"

Translated by Gladys Yang
Illustrations by Yao Yu-to

Taking Fertilizer to the Fields →
(wood-block print) by Yang Yung-ching

Yang Yung-ching is a young woodcut artist who has never been to an art school. The only training he had was in 1958 when he joined the Spare-time Woodcut Training Class organized by the Masses' Art Centre of Peking. "Inspired by the giant strides of New China in the big leap forward, we are immensely proud," he said. "We are eager and want most impatiently to express this through the medium of woodcuts." Besides a strong feeling of life, his works have a fresh and lyrical style. His *By the Lantsang River* was reproduced in *Chinese Literature* No. 11, 1959.



CHAO CHUNG,
CHANG PAO-HUA
and CHUNG YI-PING

Yesterday

(A comic dialogue)

A. It's been ages since we met.
B. It certainly has.
A. Why haven't you come around to the house to see us?
B. Who's got time!
A. My paternal uncle mentions you a lot.
B. Your paternal uncle?
A. My father's brother, that is.
B. Everybody knows that! But where did you get a paternal uncle, all of a sudden?
A. You met him when you were a kid. Don't you remember?
B. Oh. But how come I didn't see him the last time I went to your house?
A. He's been in the hospital all this while.
B. Then I really must visit the old fellow. What was wrong with him?
A. Off his rocker.
B. I'm not going! He's liable to hit me!
A. He's cured now!
B. What made him go crazy?

A. Ah, don't ask. It happened back in '48, before liberation. My aunt and uncle were both living in the country.

B. Oh, peasants.

A. He was a landlord's hired hand. Not enough to eat, not enough to wear, beaten and pushed around all the time—my uncle just couldn't take it any more. He came to Peking and looked up my father.

B. Oh! And how was your family getting along then?

A. Getting along? My pa and ma were both sick.

B. Everything depended on you.

A. I was still very young.

B. What did you do?

A. We pawned what we had for food. Soon there was nothing left to pawn, nothing left to sell. As if that weren't enough, my uncle came.

B. He'd better find a job.

A. So much unemployment, where was a poor man going to look for work?

B. Why not become a pedlar?

A. No capital.

B. He could have borrowed a little money?

A. Borrow? Poor men didn't have any rich friends. H.H. Kung, T.V. Sung — they were rolling in wealth. Did you have any contact with them?

B. We never met.

A. In the big compound where we lived, we had several neighbours. But which could we touch for a loan? The man in the east wing was a scissors-grinder.

B. You couldn't borrow from him.

A. In the south wing was a merchant.

B. Ah, the very man.

A. He wasn't a very big merchant.

B. What was his line?

A. Selling ear cleaners.

B. Much too small!

A. In the west wing was a college graduate, a young fellow named Wang. But we couldn't borrow from him.

B. A college graduate should have had a good job.

A. He sold farmers almanacs for a living.

B. A college graduate sold almanacs?

A. The only rich person in our compound was the landlady.

B. You could have gone to her for a little money.

A. My uncle did. She understood the minute she saw him, "What's wrong? Need money? There's nothing to worry about. First take a hundred thousand. If that's not enough, come back for more."

B. What a nice woman!

A. "Five-part interest."

B. You had to pay interest too? Five for every hundred? That's five thousand yuan.

A. Not five thousand. Fifty thousand. Five for every ten.

B. A devil of a debt!

A. My uncle took the money and counted it. "Excuse me, landlady," he said. "I'm borrowing a hundred thousand. There's only fifty thousand here." "That's right," she said. "I've deducted the first month's interest."

B. She collected the interest in advance?

A. Holding the money, my uncle felt very bad. "What else can you do in times like these?" he said to himself. But the more he thought about it, the less he liked it. "With the interest so high, how will I ever be able to repay when the debt becomes due?" he wondered. So a few minutes later he gave the money back to the landlady. Very pleased, she complimented him. "You're the kind of borrower I like," she said. "You've only just taken the loan and here you are already with next month's interest."

B. What!

A. "A hundred thousand gone before I've even turned around?" cried my uncle. Wang, the college graduate, came over to our room and said to my uncle, "How can you borrow from the landlady? Her son is known as the neighbourhood emperor. No one dares rub him the wrong way. What can one do in times like this? Although I'm a college graduate, I have to peddle almanacs for a living. Not long ago I sold my things and bought a rickshaw to try and earn some money as a puller. After two days of hauling fares I started

to spit blood. Uncle, why don't you go out with the rickshaw and see what you can do?" My uncle was very moved. "It's only the poor who help the poor."

B. There really are good men in this world.

A. He had no experience as a puller, so he wandered through the quiet lanes, but he couldn't find a fare. At last he saw in the distance someone carrying a sack, all in a sweat and looking around. My uncle ran up to him with the rickshaw, "Ride, sir?" he just started to say when he saw what the fellow was doing — picking coal out of a cinder heap!

B. How could he afford to ride!

A. After my uncle wandered around all morning without finding a fare, his stomach was growling with hunger. So he spent five hundred and bought a muffin.

B. Five hundred yuan for an ordinary muffin?

A. The Kuomintang "gold" yuan weren't worth the paper they were printed on. My uncle didn't have the heart to finish the muffin all at one go. So he ate half and put the rest in his pocket. Then he came to Legation Street. He was just resting the shafts of his rickshaw when some foreign patrolmen and Kuomintang cops all descended on him. "Is this the place for the likes of you? Eh? Just look at you. These tall buildings are where the foreigners live. They all have automobiles when they want to go anywhere. Who would ride in your rickshaw? Are you trying to get us into trouble?" Crash! With one stroke of the club, a cop broke his mudguard. My uncle picked up his rickshaw and ran.

B. A good thing he did. Otherwise they'd have beaten him up.

A. By then it was getting dark. He knew that at home we'd had nothing to eat all day.

B. At least he could buy a little flour.

A. He came to a flour shop and parked his rickshaw by the side. Counting off the price of three catties, he went into the shop and said, "Three catties of flour, please." The proprietor looked at his money and asked, "Are you crazy? Who's going to give you three catties for the price of two?"

"But this is what three catties cost." "The price has gone up."

B. It certainly rose fast. So he took the two catties?

A. "Where's your sack?" asked the proprietor. Not having a sack, my uncle went out to the rickshaw and got a couple of sheets of newspaper from the box. "All right. Give me my two catties." "What do you mean two? One!"

B. Wasn't he paying for two catties?

A. In the time he went for the paper, the price had gone up again.

B. It rose again?

A. My uncle said, "How could the price go up so fast?" "Cut the chatter. Do you want the flour or not? Better take it now before it goes any higher."

B. What!

A. My uncle decided — buy! Otherwise this little bit of money would soon give him only enough flour for a bowl of paste. He paid the proprietor and came out of the shop, carrying his flour. Across the street, a wounded soldier, walking with crutches and clutching a medicine bottle, rushed over and bumped into him.

B. Deliberately!

A. The soldier dropped his medicine bottle to the ground. Crash, and it was broken. "Why don't you look where you're going? You broke my medicine bottle. That's imported American stuff I need for my injections! Sloppymycin. . . ."

B. What?

A. Sloppy — ah, he didn't know himself.

B. An outright swindler!

A. "Pay me!" He grabbed for the flour. My uncle said, "Captain, I can't give you this. . . ." "What do you mean you can't? It's mine!"

B. A fine wounded veteran!

A. My uncle burst into tears. A man standing on the side said, "It's just your tough luck, old man. Those wounded soldiers, no one dares cross them. You'd better remember — the next time you see a soldier, get out of his way!" "Open robbery," cried my uncle, "and no one does anything

about it! Isn't there any place I can get justice? . . ." Before he could say another word, someone clapped a hand over his mouth and hissed, "It's forbidden to discuss national affairs!"

B. They didn't even let you talk then!

A. My uncle turned round for another look (startled) —

B. What happened?

A. His rickshaw had disappeared.

B. What a day he'd had!

A. He sat down on a step, his eyes staring straight ahead. He was speechless. . . .

B. Overcome with troubles.

A. His nerves had snapped.

B. Driven mad!

A. How could we cure him in those days? We could only let him roam the streets. Only after liberation were we able to get him into the Hospital for Mental Diseases.

B. His ailment must have been serious.

A. He'd lost his reason completely. He stayed alone in his room, afraid to meet people. If anyone came near him, he got worse.

B. He'd been tormented too much.

A. In the hospital, they did everything to cure him. Recently, they tried a new method and succeeded; suddenly his mind became clear. "What am I doing here? Did that wounded soldier beat me up? How was I brought to a hospital?"

B. He was thinking quite rationally now.

A. "When did I get here? Yesterday?"

B. Yesterday?

A. He'd lost track of time. "It must have been yesterday. What a fancy hospital! A day here must cost a lot of money." Just then a nurse came in with his lunch. (Imitating a nurse tiptoeing into the room.)

B. Why walk like that?

A. You see, he was afraid to meet people. The nurse put his lunch down and was just leaving when my uncle said, "I don't want lunch, doctor, I'm better. I must be going." When the nurse heard him talking so sensibly, she ran out, delighted. In a few minutes the hospital superintendent, the doctor, the head nurse and the medical director all came. "Why aren't you eating your lunch, grandpa?" said the superintendent. "Oh. . . . I don't want this. I've still got half a muffin."

B. He hadn't forgotten that muffin!

A. "Doctor, who brought me here yesterday?"

B. Still talking about yesterday!

A. Everyone laughed. "It wasn't yesterday, grandpa," said the superintendent. "You've been here ten years." My uncle was startled. "What! Ten years?" "Yes. And now, thanks to injections, medicine, acupuncture, electro-therapy, and the treatment of Western type and traditional Chinese doctors, you've been cured at last." My uncle thought to himself, "Trying to saddle me with a load of phony charges!"

B. He thought the hospital was padding the bill.

A. "Doctor, I'm a poor man." "Don't worry, grandpa," said the superintendent. "Here in this hospital you get treatment free of charge. Stay and rest a few more days. See you later." And they all walked out. The more my uncle thought, the more puzzled he became. "Free of charge? Never heard of such a thing. When the time comes, they'll add everything to the bill. I'll have to go to the neighbourhood emperor for another loan. No, there's only one thing to do. I'll make a run for it!" He slipped out.

B. Did he still know his way home?

A. Chienmen Gate was right outside the hospital. He started through it, but didn't dare go any further.

B. What was the matter?

A. "This can't be Tien An Men! Is it or isn't it? (Asks B.) Is it?"

B. Don't ask me!

A. A little boy wearing the red scarf of the Young Pioneers came along and my uncle stopped him. "I say, young master!"

B. Young master?

A. "Is this Tien An Men?" "It certainly is, grandpa," the boy said. "So the foreigners have put up these fine buildings and laid out these beautiful gardens," my uncle mused.

B. Foreigners?

A. "They weren't built by foreigners, grandpa, we built them ourselves." "Who's we?" "Why all of us. You have a share in it too." "Me? Where would I get the money to build such mansions?"

B. Oh!

A. The child said, "See, there's the Monument to the People's Heroes, and that's where the deputies to the People's Congress meet. . . ." "People's Congress?" "Of course. The place where we people conduct the affairs of our nation —" My uncle clapped a hand over the boy's mouth. *"Shhh.* It's forbidden to discuss national affairs!"

B. The old Kuomintang prohibition!

A. The youngster laughed. "We must understand our national affairs, grandpa, in order to —" "Hush. Go away. Move on, quickly!" The boy raised his hand over his head in a Pioneer salute and said, "Goodbye." My uncle nearly jumped out of his skin. "That kid wanted to hit me!"

B. Why did he scare so easily?

A. We all were very worried after he ran away.

B. How come?

A. The hospital called up our house and said that my uncle was cured, so I rushed down in a taxi. But when I got there, they said he had run off alone. They were out searching for him, and I started to search too.

B. How did you find him?

A. It was easy. He was the only man at Tien An Men in pajamas. I spotted him immediately. I got out of the cab and walked up to him. "Do you remember me, uncle?" "Iron Egg!" he cried.

B. Your nickname as a kid!

A. "You are Iron Egg, aren't you?" "That's right, I'm Iron Egg," I answered. "There's something wrong here. How did you get so tall in one day?" he asked.

B. I never heard of such a thing!

A. I said, "Let's go home and I'll tell you all about it. Get into the car." "What! We're going to ride in an automobile?"

B. Was that such a novelty?

A. Who could afford taxis in the old days? I said, "Please get into the car." I pushed him in. He sat there, very uneasy. "Are you sure we can ride in this contraption?" he asked. I said, "Anyone can ride in a car nowadays." "Then how do the rickshaw pullers earn a living?"

B. He hadn't forgotten pulling a rickshaw.

A. I said, "We don't have any more rickshaw pullers." *"Aiya!* They've all become beggars?" he asked. The taxi driver put in a word. "I used to be a rickshaw puller myself."

B. See, and he'd become a taxi driver.

A. My uncle kept getting more and more puzzled. When the taxi reached our door, the driver helped him into our courtyard. My uncle thanked him. "It's very good of you, brother. But don't bother about me. Get back before someone swipes your car!"

B. Who would do such a thing?

A. At the door of our flat, my uncle hesitated.

B. Didn't he recognize it?

A. Hard to say. Our place was very different before. After the liberation we moved into the north wing, where the landlady used to live. Three rooms facing south, spacious and sunny, and we'd bought a lot of new furniture.

B. Quite a change.

A. My uncle stared when we went inside, then asked, "What are we doing here?" I said, "This is our home." "Our home? But aren't you on the *kang* practically the minute you step in the door?" he asked.

B. He was thinking of the tiny room where the *kang* took up almost all the space.

A. I said, "Don't you remember? This is where the landlady used to live." My uncle got angry. "Have you become the neighbourhood emperor?" he asked. "Out with it. How did you get so rich?"

B. Rich?

A. "Now listen to me," he said. "We may be poor, but we can't do bad things and hurt people." "Uncle," I said, "you're still thinking of the time when we had nothing to eat." "How can I forget," he said —

B. That was years ago.

A. "—It was only yesterday. . . ."

B. Still yesterday!

A. "Uncle," I said, "you've been in hospital ten years." "Ten years?" he said. "Things couldn't change so much even in twenty." "It will take a little time to make clear to you everything that's happened in the past ten years, uncle," I said. "As to that neighbourhood emperor, he's long since gone to a court of law." "All the more reason why we can't afford to cross him," he insisted. "Hah!" I said. "He's been put under control." "What!" said my uncle. "Are there people who dare to control emperors?" "We all have jobs now," I said. "My aunt, back in the village, has entered a Home of Respect for the Aged. She's very happy." "My wife, happy?" he retorted. "Am I dreaming?"

B. It's all real.

A. "You're not dreaming," I said. As we were talking, Mr. Wang, the college graduate, came in. "How wonderful, uncle," he said. "You're out of the hospital! Do you remember me?" "Oh, Mr. Wang," my uncle cried. "A thousand apologies!"

B. Why?

A. "I've lost your rickshaw!" Wang laughed. "Forget it. That's ancient history. We're all doing well now. Take me—I'm in the Construction Bureau." "You mean you're selling your farmers almanacs there?"

B. Hah!

A. "Why don't you go out and show your uncle around a bit?" suggested Wang. I thought—that's a good idea. I'll take the old boy out for a stroll. Then I remembered. "You'd better put some regular clothes on!"

B. He was still in his pajamas!

A. After he changed, I said, "You'd better take some money." "What for? I won't be able to buy anything with it." "Take a little along, for convenience' sake." "All right. Give me two thousand yuan for the time being."

B. Two thousand!

A. "Here's ten." "Ten? A plain muffin costs five hundred!" "This isn't the Kuomintang's 'gold' yuan, uncle. Take it."

B. Today we have real money.

A. We got to the shopping district on Wangfuching Street and were just about to cross when my uncle pulled back. "Here comes a cop!" "But he's a people's policeman," I said. "A cop's a cop, and he's carrying a club!"

B. That was his traffic baton!

A. I said, "You see, uncle. He's helping that old lady across the street and he's carrying her packages. Isn't that nice?" "Must be his mother!" said my uncle.

B. Our people's police are the same to everyone!

A. When we reached the State Department Store, my uncle looked at it in amazement. "What a business they're doing! Iron Egg, what company owns this?" I said, "It belongs to all of us."

B. That's right, all the people.

A. "Let's go in," I said. "Such a beautiful place," he said. "Won't they chase us out?"

B. The things he could think of!

A. "Look at the crowds," I said. "They're all the same kind of people as us. Nobody will chase us out. Come on." Only then would he go in. Inside, he took one look and said, "How crowded it is. Hold on to your money, Iron Egg."

B. What was the matter?

A. "Someone may grab it!" "Don't worry," I said. "Nobody steals any more." "Oh no? They even swiped a big thing like my rickshaw!" I couldn't convince him. He kept taking his money out every few steps to make sure he still had it.

B. That's what his experience in the old society had taught him.

A. I took him up to the second floor and said, "We'll buy you a pair of shoes." "Let's go to Tienchiao market," he said. "It's too expensive here."

B. The prices are the same all over the city!

A. The salesman brought out six or seven pairs of shoes. "I only want one pair, Mr. Manager!" said my uncle. "That's

all right," said the salesman. "If you can't find a good fit you needn't buy."

B. He wanted your uncle to try them on for size.

A. My uncle tried on a pair. "These are fine. Iron Egg, pay the man the money, quick!"

B. What was his hurry?

A. He was afraid the price would go up.

B. He thought we still had inflation!

A. After we bought the shoes, I said to him, "Come and sit down for a while." I led him to one of the lounges. A young fellow who was sitting there stood up and said, "Take my chair, grandpa." My uncle sat there uneasily. He pulled his money out of his pocket. "Still got it," he muttered. (Motion of putting money back but dropping it.)

B. He was still afraid of losing it.

A. "Wait here, uncle," I said. "I'll get you a drink." As I was bringing it to him, he started to run. "What's the matter?" I asked. "There's a soldier in there!" he said. "That's a comrade from our Liberation Army!" I told him.

B. What was he afraid of?

A. "I've been warned – when you see a soldier, get out of his way!" I said: "Our Liberation Army men are the soldiers of the people –" He said: "Don't say any more! Here he comes! He's after me!"

B. What was going on?

A. I looked. Sure enough the PLA man was coming our way. Running for all he was worth, my uncle flew down the stairs to the ground floor. A crowd gathered round him to ask what was wrong.

B. He really started something.

A. The PLA comrade went up to him and said, "What are you running for, grandpa? Here, this is yours." "Eh?"

B. What was it?

A. "You dropped your money." "*Aiya. . . .*" My uncle searched his pocket, reached out for the money, then pulled his hand back. "Ah . . . captain, keep it for yourself!"

B. What kind of talk was that?

A. Everybody laughed. "How can I take your money, grandpa?" the PLA comrade asked. My uncle was moved to tears. Just then the loud-speaker made an announcement. "Attention, comrades. A fountain-pen and a purse have been found. Will the owners please claim them on the second floor? On the second floor." "Did you hear that, uncle?" I asked. "Anything you lose, you can get back." My uncle thought for a moment, then rushed for the stairs. Chasing after him, I called, "Uncle, where are you going?" "Back to the second floor," he shouted over his shoulder. "I'm going to pick up my rickshaw!"

Translated by Sidney Shapiro

TANG LAN

Ancient Chinese Art

The later part of the thirteenth century, at the end of the Sung and the beginning of the Yuan dynasty, saw fresh developments in ancient Chinese art. After the Mongols united the whole of China and established the Yuan dynasty, the new military, political and economic developments had an inevitable impact on culture and art.

The change was most evident in painting. Chinese painting had always had two branches, professional and amateur. The professional artists were mostly craftsmen, like those who painted murals in the Han, Tang and Sung dynasties, or those painters chosen to work for the rulers in the Imperial Art Academy. These artists, who came from the people, had a profound and wide knowledge of life. Moreover since they often worked in teams, when painting large frescoes, for instance, they could more easily make use of their collective experience and wisdom. So their work has a strongly realistic content, expressing the aspirations of the people, while their technique shows incomparable vitality. These artists were the main motive force in the development of Chinese painting. The other artists, the amateurs, were

This is the third and final article by Tang Lan on the exhibits of the Gallery of Art Through the Ages in the Peking Palace Museum. By appraising these exhibits, the author gives a concise summary of the achievements of ancient Chinese art. The previous two articles were published in our second and third issues this year.

mostly nobles or scholars who loved painting, such as Ku Kai-chih of the Tsin dynasty, Yen Li-pen and Wang Wei of the Tang dynasty, or Mi Fei and Li Kung-lin of the Sung dynasty. In the main, the art of painting developed thanks to centuries of hard work by professional craftsmen; but certain outstanding painters also appeared among the amateurs, who helped to raise the level of technique because they were able to learn from the fine achievements of folk artists and were themselves in a favourable position. Thus the ceaseless development of painting through the ages before the Yuan dynasty was the result of a combination of both forces. Prior to the Yuan dynasty, the themes of paintings were extremely varied, reflecting the different aspects of the real life of the time. After the establishment of the Yuan dynasty, the Imperial Art Academy was disbanded, and the tradition of the Southern Sung palace painting was abandoned. Then scholar-artists, headed by Chao Meng-fu, dominated the field of graphic art and there was a marked reduction in themes, which were restricted mainly to landscapes, plum blossom and orchids, pines and bamboos. The artists paid all their attention to technical skill in brushwork and the use of ink, advocated learning from old masters and believed that painting should breathe the spirit of the past. They stressed brevity and informality, were opposed to the meticulous craftsmanship of the Southern Sung palace paintings, and despised those by craftsmen. In their work we no longer find scenes of the people's daily life.

During this period, however, there was a great flowering of handicrafts. Early in the Yuan dynasty artisans from different localities were brought together to common workshops, where they were able to learn from each other's techniques and experience. Moreover, since the Mongol empire stretched across Asia and Europe, certain foreign influences were introduced, bringing about increased variety and new methods of manufacture. The good communications with other lands, the development of foreign trade and the growth of commercial centres all played a noteworthy part in stimulating the production of handicrafts. From the Yuan dynasty onwards, the government was in direct control of the handicraft centres and organized the workshops. In Peking, the capital of the Yuan dynasty, were concentrated the most skilful craftsmen of the whole country, whose new

A Section of the *Seven Buddhas Fresco*

products influenced all other regions. This mutual impetus contributed to the splendid achievements of Chinese handicrafts.

The third section in the Gallery of Art Through the Ages starts with the Yuan dynasty. The Hall of Murals opens with the great *Seven Buddhas Fresco,* more than eighteen metres long, from Hsinhua Monastery in Chishan County, Shansi. It was painted in 1298, the first year of the Tateh period, and is generally attributed to Chu Hao-ku, a noted Shansi mural painter of that time, and to some of his many pupils. The well-known Yunglokung Murals were painted by his pupils. This fresco preserves the tradition of the Tang and Sung dynasties, being hardly distinguishable from those of Tunhuang. Some of the frescoes of Hsinhua Monastery have been looted by the imperialists. This one was also taken to Tientsin by unscrupulous merchants in league with the imperialists to be shipped away, when it was discovered by the

former Institute of Classical Studies of Peking University and prevented from leaving the country. In 1958, during the high tide of the nationwide big leap forward, our technicians repaired the damage done to this precious masterpiece so that now it can be exhibited to the people.

Yuan dynasty painting represents a period of transition between the old and the new. For example, *The Hermitage** by Chien Hsuan continues the tradition of the Sung artists. Chao Meng-fu was another great master who carried forward the past traditions to create a new school. One exhibit in the Gallery, *Watering Horses on an Autumn Day,*** shows how superbly he learned from the Tang masters. Another of his paintings, *Gaunt Rock and Sparse Forest,* represents the new style he created. Since he was at the same time a fine calligrapher, he introduced his excellent brushwork into his painting and his compositions have strength and maturity. His theory that "calligraphy and painting have one common source" originated from this painting. Chao Meng-fu held a very high position and was one of the most celebrated of the scholars of his day. Later artists owed much to his influence; thus the "Four Yuan Dynasty Masters," Wu Chen, Huang Kung-wang, Wang Meng and Ni Tsan, belonged to his school, which left its mark on all Yuan dynasty painting. Moreover, Ming and Ching artists were influenced in turn by these four. Among the exhibits of the Gallery are *Bamboo and Rock* by Wu Chen, *Sunny Peaks After Snow* by Huang Kung-wang, *Summer Repose in the Mountains* by Wang Meng, and *Autumn Pavilion and Fine Trees* by Ni Tsan. The *Portrait of Yang Chu-hsi* by Wang Yi is one of the earliest portrait paintings in existence. These famous paintings, eagerly sought but seldom seen by artists in the past, are now assembled here for the enjoyment of all students of Yuan painting. In fact, at no period in our history have artists had access to so many masterpieces.

At the beginning of the Ming dynasty the Imperial Art Academy was revived with Tai Chin as its leader. The Gallery shows his *Travelling Through Mountain Passes,* which has affinities to the

* See *Chinese Literature* No. 6, 1959.

** See *Chinese Literature* No. 2, 1956.

Southern Sung style. Wu Wei and Lu Chi are celebrated artists of this period. Lu Chi's *Withered Lotus and Frightened Egret* depicts a hawk whirling in the sky while a frightened egret tries to hide itself under withered lotus leaves. This picture is intensely alive. In the middle of the Ming dynasty Shen Chou, Tang Yin, Wen Chen-ming and Chou Ying of Soochow were known as the "Four Soochow Masters." Tang Yin and Chou Ying developed the Tang and Sung traditions. *Palace Singing Girls of the Kingdom of Later Shu* and *Wind Among the Trees* are representative works by Tang Yin, a celebrated artist whose name is often found in folk literature. *Wind Among the Trees,* with leaves falling in the wind, suggests the grief felt by the man in the painting who is mourning his dead parents. Though simple in style, it is remarkably moving. Few genuine specimens of Chou Ying's paintings have been preserved, but *Jade Cavern and Fairy Stream* is typical of his work.

Shen Chou and Wen Chen-ming, master and pupil, were versatile artists famed for their landscapes. Together they covered a period of a hundred and twenty years, establishing themselves as the leaders of the Soochow School. Most artists after the middle of the Ming dynasty came under their influence. Shen Chou's flower paintings owed much to those of Fa Chang of the Southern Sung dynasty. The ink sketches of flowers by Wen Chen-ming's pupil Chen Chun initiated a new style.

Ming dynasty porcelain developed from blue-and-white to polychrome, a landmark in the history of ceramics. The colours were superimposed on the glaze, a simpler manufacturing technique than applying red or blue pigments under the glaze, and one greatly increasing the effectiveness and variety of the colours. The copper incense-burners made in the Hsuanteh period (1426-1435) were a step forward in metal work. The fineness of the metal and the new method of mixing alloys produced gleaming wares with lovely colours, much heavier than ordinary copper vessels and with a beautiful lustre. The forms not only adopted certain features of the ancient bronzes, but also borrowed shapes from ceramics; and besides reproducing the patina of old bronzes they achieved the sheen of glazed porcelain, evolving a new style. Because of this, the Hsuanteh incense-burners were highly rated even in the Ming dynasty. The Gallery displays some of the best

specimens. The manufacture of cloisonné ware reached its peak during the Chingtai period (1450-1456), and "Chingtai Lan" is known throughout the world. The palace collection, however, has several examples of cloisonné inscribed with the Hsuanteh date, the existence of which was not previously known.

Bowl Inscribed with the Hsuanteh Date

Towards the end of the Ming dynasty in the early seventeenth century, an influential, new school appeared in the history of painting. The chief representative of this new trend was Tung Chi-chang. Most paintings by the literati of that period were insipid and vulgar in style; but the new landscapes of Tung Chi-chang, an outstanding calligrapher as well as a painter with a great mastery of the use of ink and brushwork, towered above the work of contemporary scholars. His style was inherited at the end of the Ming dynasty by Wang Shih-ming and Wang Chien, and at the beginning of the Ching dynasty by Wang Huei and Wang Yuan-chi, Wu Li and Yun Shou-ping. These six masters are usually mentioned together. Wang Huei, who was most successful in imitating the ancient style, made a painting of Emperor Kang Hsi's tour of the south. Wang Yuan-chi was the head of the Imperial Art Academy. Therefore, their landscapes were thought to represent the orthodox style, and their influence remained till the end of the Ching dynasty. In general they copied the "Four Yuan Dynasty Masters," and though they introduced new developments in the use of ink and brushwork their composition and conception held little that was new; thus their works could not be appreciated by a wide public. Tung Chi-chang put forward a theory of his own, describing his paintings as scholar's paintings and despising all the work of professional draughtsmen. Many artists after him followed this tradition and produced formulistic, stereotyped landscape paintings. This should not, however, make us underestimate Tung Chi-chang's own artistic achievement,

although we can see how such a fashion in painting represented the artistic trend among the literati during the decline of feudal society.

Some artists like Hsiang Shen-mo towards the end of the Ming dynasty embodied a hidden meaning in their paintings. *The Big Tree Rises to the Sky,* on display in the Gallery, is boldly conceived. A large tree occupies the middle of the painting and its implied significance in a time of foreign invasion was that men should stand forth to take command of the situation. Chen Hung-shou's best medium was wood-blocks. His illustrations for *Water Margin* show characters strongly imbued with the spirit of revolt. His *Lotus Flower and Mandarin Ducks,* with its vivid colouring and highly decorative effect, sheds light on the development of wood-block prints in that period. The portraitist Tseng Ching, some of whose work is displayed in the Gallery, was the first to adopt certain new Western techniques in his painting. The flower paintings of Yun Shou-ping in the early Ching dynasty reached new heights of artistic skill.

The paintings of the late Ming monks Shih Tao and Chu Ta, the latter also known as Pa-ta-shan-jen, are original in style. The composition of Shih Tao's landscapes broke all past conventions, while Pa-ta-shan-jen's ink-sketches of birds and flowers show superb skill in conveying the spirit of his subjects. The Gallery has Shih Tao's *Poems and Sketches* and Pa-ta-shan-jen's *Lotus Flower and Water Bird,* both of them boldly original. However, the work of these men found little favour with the ruling class.

After the eighteenth century, some new schools of painting appeared in certain commercial centres. First there was the Yangchow School with the flower and bird paintings of Hua Yen or Hsin-lo-shan-jen, which offered something fresh to those used to the traditional landscapes. "The Eight Eccentrics of Yangchow," headed by Chin Nung and Chen Hsi, lacked the virtuosity of some orthodox artists, but their paintings have freshness and spirit as well as a wider range of themes, including orchids, plum blossom and other flowers, bamboo, vegetables, fruit, human beings and subjects of all sorts. Thus their works, closer to the people, were deservedly popular. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Shanghai became a great centre of commerce and artists like Jen Po-nien and Hsu Ku, both of whom were

good at painting flowers and birds as well as people, created new styles and founded the Shanghai School. There was also Chao Chih-chien, proficient in writing various ancient scripts, who carried forward the art of calligraphy. He was a skilled seal-cutter and flower painter too. Wu Chun-ching was influenced by Chao Chih-chien and in turn influenced Chi Pai-shih, who made a great advance from the tradition of Chen Chun and Hsu Wei of the Ming dynasty.

Bowl with Pheasant and Peony Design

The handicrafts of the Ching dynasty attained a very high level in technique and quality. Apart from cloisonné enamel, a new kind of enamel painting was introduced and used to make coloured enamel porcelain called *ku-yueh-hsuan.* This ware has a very thin base and exquisite coloured designs. One rare specimen in the Gallery is a bowl with a pheasant and peony design. During the Chienlung period (1736-1795) much jade was sent to the capital from Sinkiang Province, and jade carving was highly developed. The Gallery's *Nine Old Men of the Hueichang Period** is one of the largest jade sculptures known today. The embroidered screen *The Cowherd and the Weaving Maid* produced in Soochow is superb. Then there are vessels of several kinds of opaque glass known as *tao-liao,* a new form of handicraft. There are ink-stones made by Ku Erh-niang of Soochow, bamboo carved by Feng Hsi-chueh of Chiating, iron grille pictures by the blacksmith Tang Peng of Wuhu and the lacquerware of Lu Tung (Lu Kuei-sheng) of Yangchow. All these possess distinctive features.

* During the Hueichang period (841-846) the Tang poet Pai Chu-yi and eight old scholars were painted together. This carving was based on that picture.

The Ching dynasty was China's last feudal dynasty. By then the art of the scholar-official class was very remote from that of the people. But the mighty tide of folk art had never dried up. The wood-block prints which had originated in the Ming dynasty came to be printed in several colours, and some excellent work was produced like the designs on the stationery of the Ten Bamboo Studio. This method spread subsequently through the countryside and was employed in the New-Year Pictures of Yangliuching near Tientsin and Taohuawu near Soochow. Few large sculptures were produced, but the dough and clay figures made in Yangchow, Soochow, Wusih and Tientsin were popular favourites. The embroidery of the Miao nationality and the carpets woven by Uighurs reveal distinctive national characteristics as well as the influence of one nationality upon another.

The exhibits in the Gallery of Art Through the Ages present a display unprecedented in Chinese history. This collection is a product of the big leap forward. Only under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, when objects of art collected from all over the country were scientifically studied and systematically arranged, could these representative exhibits be assembled here. These important cultural relics provide the best proof of the fine traditions and continuous development of Chinese culture and art through the ages, summing up the developments over thousands of years.

Transporting Timber from the Mountain →
(coloured woodcut) by Liu Lo-sheng

Liu Lo-sheng, a young woodcut artist, was demobilized from the Chinese People's Liberation Army in 1958 when he went to work as a farmer at a farm in the Northern Wasteland. To study the scenes he needed for his woodcuts he often went out to sketch in the bitter cold of 40 degrees below zero. This woodcut was produced under such conditions.

LI MIEN-LU

Chinese Carpets

China's far-stretching and fertile grasslands provide rich pastures for fine, sturdy sheep. The wool produced in our country is known far and wide. The wool used for carpets is strongly resilient and lustrous. And the carpets made of this wool, skilfully designed and woven by hand, rank high in the handicraft art of the world.

Since the Northwest is China's main wool-producing region, the carpet industry which has a long history originated there. Indeed carpets were already being woven during the Han dynasty (207 B.C.-220 A.D.). Since the founding of the Chinese People's Republic, the government has paid considerable attention to the carpet industry. From 1950 onwards it has organized master craftsmen and specialists in carpet manufacture to study and improve on the designs continuously. Many artistic traditional designs have been revived and perfected, a great increase in variety and colour heightening their artistic value.

There are Chinese carpets of many kinds. They include carpets for sitting-rooms and lounges, bedroom rugs and wall hangings, saddle covers and carpets for the stage. The designs and colours also vary widely to suit the specific requirements. In general, carpets for sitting-rooms are relatively florid and vivid in colour; those used in stately halls may have no designs but achieve a decorative effect by the choice of suitable colours. Bedroom carpets are usually simpler and more subdued to induce a sense of comfort and relaxation. Stage carpets are frequently of one single colour,

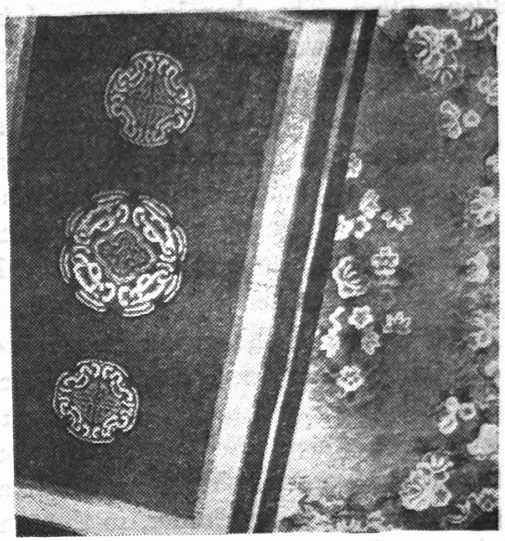
although if the stage is a very large one they may have a few designs in the middle or in the four corners to help the performers to take up their positions correctly.

Since the decorative effect of carpets woven in different colours with a raised surface of tufts is rather subdued and blurred, the lines of the designs are often clipped to make them stand out clearly.

Carpets used as floor coverings generally have a quiet, restful design, rather than vivid colours and strong contrasts. Decorative as well as serving a practical purpose and generally occupying large floor space, they are intended to blend harmoniously with the walls and furnishings of the room as a whole. In short, Chinese artists and craftsmen understand that they should produce carpets to meet the people's tastes and demands, varying their designs according to the carpets' specific function and texture.

The carpet-weaving industry is widely distributed in various districts of the country, possessing distinctive styles and characteristics according to the locality.

Sinkiang carpets employ traditional local designs. These are geometric patterns which cover most of the surface and are filled in with smaller floral designs. The effect is compact but orderly, for the combination of natural forms and angular devices forms a harmonious whole. The deep, warm colours suggest vitality, solidity and a certain magnificence.



Ningsia carpets are in quiet good taste. Most of them use designs taken from Tunhuang frescoes against a background of the natural colour of the wool.

Shensi carpets have bold designs, using geometrical patterns as a base. The colours are strong and clear.

The carpets of Peking and Tientsin are typical examples of Chinese carpet-weaving, attaining a very high technical level. There is a great variety of styles, including the Peking style, Tunhuang style, the coloured-flower style, the monochrome style with designs in relief, and the oriental style.

Carpets in the Peking style with classical Chinese designs have absorbed some of the best features of ancient Chinese art. Their use of form and colour and their modes of expression are reminiscent of Chinese painting, embroidery, porcelain and architectural decorations, producing a distinctively Chinese style in keeping with the special nature of the carpet.

This vivid national style is conveyed not only by the form but also by the content. Motifs constantly seen in Chinese carpets are flowers and plants like peonies, orchids, chrysanthemums, pines, cedars, bamboos, and plum blossom, and lutes, chess, calligraphy, painting, and antiques, or coloured clouds, bats and butterflies, phoenixes, dragons and other objects regarded as auspicious. All these are old favourites with the Chinese people, reflecting their interests and tastes. The names of auspicious emblems in China generally either suggest or have the same sound as certain other concepts or lucky words. Thus fish and stone chimes are used to represent "abundant good fortune," a gourd stands for

"long life." The phoenix, queen of birds, and the magnificent peony denote wealth, dignity and prosperity; the pine, the bamboo and the characters for good fortune or longevity symbolize health and immortality, while dragons stand for grandeur. The use of these words or emblems with the same sound is actually a kind of language of art, for these symbols convey ideas effectively. The carpet designers take the beauties of nature which arouse healthy reactions to urge men forward by an association of ideas. This method in itself is highly artistic.

The designs in Chinese carpets are also art of a high order, characterized by conciseness, vitality, simplicity and exquisite attention to finish. The artists concentrate on the first impression of the subject, omitting inessential or ugly details to retain only the most distinctive features. Thus the forms are typified with clear-cut outlines and in a neat order, so that one can grasp the idea at a glance. For instance, one bough may show flowers in full bloom together with others newly opened, as well as buds, so that the whole effect is healthy and satisfyingly all-inclusive.

Carpets in the Peking style have borders containing continuous lines or lines divided into sections filled with designs to blend with the pattern in the middle. There are often narrower panels between the centre and the border to make a harmony of colouring and produce a sense of balance and rhythm as well as unity and variety with distinct outlines. The four corners of the central pattern usually have small corner designs. In the middle there are one or a couple of round patterns or an arabesque, resulting in a well-organized, lively composition combining open space and density. Secondary colours are most commonly used, or graded shades of one colour, such as blue, contrasted with other colours. This is subdued and pleasing with its blend of simplicity and elegance.

Tunhuang carpets, which began to be manufactured in 1955, use slightly modified figures and ornamentation from the frescoes and ceiling designs of the Tunhuang Caves, based largely on Tang dynasty designs. The composition is closely integrated, complex yet symmetrical, and the colour schemes have splendour and distinction.

Monochrome carpets have clipped designs in relief. The bold, simple lines possess dignity and charm. Occasionally two similar colours are used. The composition is lively, often using arabesques.

Chinese carpets are by no means stereotyped in style, for the designs are continuously enriched and improved following developments in society. Many traditional ink paintings by noted Chinese painters have been skilfully adapted by the carpet-weavers. Craftsmen, despised in the old society, found that New China has opened a broad path for their work. Under the impact of the new society, they have created many fine and original compositions.

At present Chinese carpets are being made in more than a thousand designs. These colourful handicraft products, possessing a marked national style, excellent patterns well-executed in pleasing colours and a strong pliant texture with bright shades gleaming against dark backgrounds, are warmly admired both in China and abroad. Chinese carpets fully display the genius, wisdom and high artistic gifts of the Chinese labouring people.

Chronicle

Re-edited and Newly Published Classics

In recent years, academic circles in China have re-edited a series of books from the vast number of old classics. This has been done scientifically according to the principle that the old must serve the new, and taking the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint. The chief works edited are divided into two categories: reading for the general public and reference material for research students and teachers. Among the annotated classics already published the outstanding ones include *Selections from the Book of Songs, Selected Poems of the Han, Wei and the Six Dynasties, Selected Poems of Tu Fu, The Romance of the Three Kingdoms, Water Margin, The Dream of the Red Chamber,* and *The Scholars.* Works intended for the general public include *A Hundred Tang Dynasty Poems, A Hundred Sung Dynasty Poems* and *Selection of Vernacular Tales*; and reference books on literature such as *Collected Writings from the Late Ching Dynasty* and *The Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature Against Aggression.* In addition massive works such as *Tse-fu-yuan-kuei,* a Sung dynasty encyclopedia, and the *Yunglo Encyclopedia* have been photolithographed. These ancient classics, most of which have newly written prefaces, commentaries and notes, are analysed and evaluated from a new approach. A considerable number of classical works on politics, economics and history have also been published. These publications are warmly welcomed for they have made a definite contribution towards popularizing the cultural heritage, enriching our new socialist culture and facilitating academic research. The research group for the editing of ancient classics under the Chinese Academy of Sciences has drafted a plan for the editing and printing of more classical works before 1967 to better serve the development and flourishing of our socialist culture.

Collection of Chinese Wood-block Prints

China was the first country to invent printing and movable types. The fine craftsmanship and variety of styles of her ancient engraving, block cutting and printing are universally known. The Cultural Relics Publishing House is now publishing a *Collection of Chinese Wood-block Prints,* compiled by the Peking Library, which reflects fairly comprehensively the history of engraving and printing in China.

This collection consists of more than 660 reproductions of engravings, texts printed with movable type and woodcuts from 500 of the finest printed books dating from the Tang dynasty (7th century) to the Ming and Ching dynasties (19th century). Many of these are unique specimens, never recorded at home or abroad or rare works assembled from various sources for the first time. This magnificent collection is the result of exhaustive searches and scientific study. It has great significance and reference value for the understanding of the development of Chinese engraving and printing and for the study and identification of ancient editions and classics.

Calligraphy

An exhibition of calligraphy, an art peculiar to the Han nationality, opened recently in the Palace Museum in Peking. On display were many superb examples of the writing of well-known Chinese calligraphers, writers, philosophers, national heroes, statesmen and strategists since the Wei and Tsin dynasties (3-4 century A. D.).

The brushwork and composition of these exhibits, with their wealth of styles and widely differing character, graphically reflect the social aspirations, thoughts and sentiments of calligraphers through the ages.

Joint Exhibition of Graphic Art

Recently an exhibition of graphic art was held in the capital by veteran artists of Peking, young artists of Szechuan, and amateur artists among the workers, peasants and students of Kwangtung. This original exhibition was rich in variety and local colour. It not only summarized the achievements of the three localities in graphic art

but enabled them to learn from and encourage each other. Some of the fine woodcuts generally acclaimed were *Reclaiming Land from the South Sea* by Huang Hsin-po, *Harvesting Sweet Potatoes* by Ku Yuan, *Fighting for Steel by the Furnace* by Wang Chi, *On the Chialing River* by Hsu Kuang, *The Great Wall Primary School* by Tan Chuan-shu, *Song of the Fishermen* by Sung Sheng-yen, *The Pastureland* by Li Huan-ming, and *Harvesting Slope After Slope* by Wu Fan. A most striking feature of the exhibition was the appearance of so many new artists and the outstanding achievement of workers and peasants in graphic art.

New Archaeological Finds

Paper was not widely used in China until the Eastern Han dynasty (2-3 century A. D.). Before that time characters were mostly written on bamboo tablets. Some Han dynasty bamboo and wooden tablets were unearthed recently in Kansu Province. Research shows that these were part of the *Book of Ritual,* an early Chin classic. Most of the unearthed tablets, of which 385 are intact and 225 broken, are made of wood. In general, the wood and ink have preserved their colour. The chapters recorded here are complete, retaining their original order. They provide us with important material for the study of Han dynasty classics and the old method of making books. Another new discovery is the site of a fort and drilling ground built by Cheng Cheng-kung on the Paisha Island, Fukien Province, in the 17th century. Cheng Cheng-kung, a general at the end of the Ming dynasty, resisted the Ching forces in the coastal area of Fukien when the Ming dynasty was overthrown and the Ching empire established. Later he moved to Taiwan and drove away the Dutch aggressors there, building up a base from which to resist the Ching dynasty. This find sheds interesting light on his heroic career.

Ballet Artists from Cuba

The Chinese people gave a most enthusiastic welcome to the Cuban Ballet Troupe from the other side of the Atlantic. In Peking long queues formed before the theatre in the cold early morning to buy

tickets; within a few hours tickets for all performances were sold out. The Cuban artists presented classical ballets as well as a national drama dance depicting their revolutionary struggles. The performances bespoke a very high artistic level and a wide and vivid range of styles. The distinguished ballerina Alicia Alonso as the pure and good-hearted Giselle, the naive and gay Lisetta (*Vain Precautions*) and the loving and naughty Svanilda (*Coppelia*), showed deep understanding of these different roles and a highly polished technique. She was capable of both vigour and softness; in her strength was softness and in her softness, great strength. She won loud and repeated applause from the audience. The main character — the Liberated Man — of the stirring Cuban drama dance *The Awakening* brought out forcefully the determination of the Cuban people to win freedom and liberation even at the cost of their lives. The different characters as interpreted by Joaquin Banegas and other artists evoked the Chinese people's deep sympathy and respect for the Cuban people's struggle today.

Chairman Liu Shao-chi, Premier Chou En-lai, Vice-premier Chen Yi, and Kuo Mo-jo, Vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, all attended the performances and received the Cuban artists.

The visit of the Cuban envoys of art coincided with the 108th anniversary of the birth of the Cuban national hero and great poet José Marti. Together with the Cuban artists, Peking art and cultural circles held a commemorative meeting.

Just as in Peking, the Cuban artists were warmly received by Chinese audiences in Canton, Nanking and Shanghai.

Indonesian Art

The Indonesian Art Exhibition recently held in Peking displayed works of well-known contemporary Indonesian artists. The Exhibition demonstrated that because the Indonesian people are aware of the decadent nature of Western bourgeois art and contemporary Indonesian artists are resisting the pernicious influence of the abstract school, works with a marked Indonesian national character

have been created. These works left a deep impression on the Chinese visitors to the Exhibition. Henk Ngantung's *To the Bazaar*, Tarmizi T.'s *Work for the People*, Hendra Gunawan's *Transporting Bananas*, Surono's *A Village on Bali*, Phermadi Liosta's *Bali Woman*, Sarmin's *Guerrilla Fighters*, Widagdo's *Night Bazaar*, Trubus' *Mother* and Gambir Adom's *Sleeping Baby* depicted the simple life of the Indonesian people, the colourful Bali customs and scenes, and the heroic images of guerrilla fighters struggling for national liberation. Works like these, with their clear themes and dynamic compositions, made a strong appeal to the visitors. As for the woodcuts by Suromo who is distinguished for his exquisite style, his sincere language of art reflected the pulse of Indonesian society. Many sketches, cartoons and posters were full of realistic significance. They gave forceful expression to the Indonesian people's patriotism and ardent anti-imperialist and anti-feudal spirit. This Exhibition helped to increase the friendship between the peoples and the understanding between the artists of Indonesia and China.

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